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HALLOWEEN ISSUE

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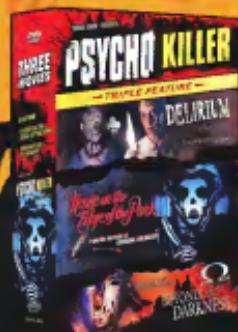
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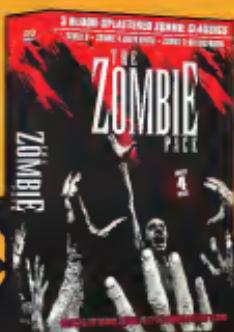
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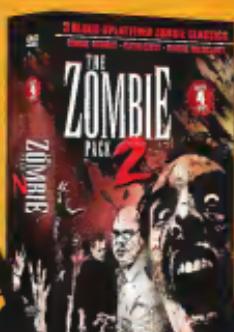
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LEGACY OF BLOOD AND DECAY

Rue Morgue celebrates *Lucio Fulci*. Featuring an interview with his daughter *Antonella*, a *Fulci* filmography, a guide to his gory set pieces, an interview with composer *Fabio Frizzi* and more!

by Stephen Thrower, Javanka Vuckovic, Chris Alexander and The Gore-met

THE CONNOISSEUR'S GUIDE TO SO ALTERNATIVE HORROR BOOKS

This Halloween, curl up with a terrifying tome.

by Rue Morgue staff

FANTASIA 2006: FESTIVAL WRAP-UP

The wrap on this year's programme of dark cinema.

by Rue Morgue staff

THE TENDERNESS OF BARBARISM

Belgian director *Fabrice Du Welz* explains his perverse and punishing cinematic love letter, *Calavre*.

by Mitch Davis

DIALLING THE DEAD:

A HISTORY OF THE OUIJA BOARD

What is it? Where did it come from, this famous conduit to the dead?

by Anthony Petruccio

ONE NASTY SUMBITCH

R. Lee Ermey dishes on his reprised role as Sheriff Floyd in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning.

by Dave Alexander

RUE MORGUE'S FESTIVAL OF FEAR 2006

Pics from this year's event.

Photos by Ken Bonnié, Peter Mihniček, Alana Pentacy, Ashlyn Wessel and Nicole Williams

THE LOVELY LADY VAMPIRE

Legendary Hammer horror supervisor Ingrid Pitt discusses her career and new genre projects.

by Tom Murray

IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT...

*Turn your next ghoulish gathering into a night of terror with *Raw Fear*, a new party game.*

by Lisa Leducque

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Note From Underground



When it comes to Italian horror, two names take priority: Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci. Though the genre would obviously not have been the same without the contributions of people like Riccardo Freda (a pioneer of the country's horror-fantasy output), Mario Bava (generally considered the godfather of Italian horror) and his son Lamberto, Ruggero Deodato, Umberto Lenzi, Antonio Margheriti, Michele Soavi, Joe D'Amato, Sergio Martino, and on and on, Argento and Fulci always figure most prominently in the collections of every self-respecting horror fan.

However, when it comes to these two, an interesting rivalry often arises. While most of us own titles by both directors (because we horror fans are obsessive nerds second only to those Star Trek freaks, right?), we're almost consistently polarized by whose films we like most: Argento or Fulci?

Myself, I'm a Fulci fan. While I understand and wholly appreciate the fact that Argento is deservedly the King of Italian horror – *Deep Red*, *Sigourney*, *Inferno*, *Teleshop* and *Opera* are personal favourites – Fulci's surreal, nonsensical, blood-drenched visions appeal to the sadist in me. We share an enjoyment of outrageous, conceptualized cruelty.

Of course, Argento is a cinematic sadist too, but I'll be damned if he can compete with the ten-inch splinter eye-gouging in *Zombie*, the little girl who gets her head blown open in *The Beyond*, the nipple-shredding in *New York Ripper* and, lord have mercy, Daniela Dorin poking up her own guts while crying tears of crimson glory in *City of the Living Dead*. If I could pick a singular, beloved, blue-eyed moment in the history of horror cinema, that masterpiece nightmarish sequence would be it.

Like French surrealist playwright Antonin Artaud, Fulci tried his best to focus his theatre less on linear narrative and more on symbolism and the shock of cruel images – *The Beyond*, being a great example. The second in his unofficial "Gates of Hell" trilogy (which includes *City of the Living Dead* and *The House by the Cemetery*), the movie is little more than a barrage of astonishing carnage (courtesy of FX legend and frequent collaborator Giannetto De Rossi) linked together by a haunted house (that has a basement in flood-prone New Orleans, no less!). And it works.

As long as he's spattering the screen with chunk-blooding gore and bulls-to-the-wall tastelessness, us Fulci fans warmly welcome the bad dubbing, incoherent narratives, absurd scenarios (the shark vs. zombie duel in *Zombie* ranking as one of the most enjoyably absurd), onane logic and ridiculous endings. These are just facts of life in his films, and what makes them so reviled by some and worshipped by others.

Sadly, most of Fulci's movies initially arrived on our shores heavily censored and haidly duplicated (as was the case with *The Beyond* in 1983), leaving them open to ridicule and dismissal as worthless inclusions in critical literature of genre cinema. It's here that I'd like to officially thank the right honourable Chas. Balun, self-proclaimed hippie and gochound, and also one of the first critics to write serious reviews and analyses of Fulci's films (among others, notably Italy's notorious cannibal cycle). His tireless championing of foreign gore cinema, along with distribution outfit like Grindhouse Releasing, greatly helped pave the way for a much-needed immigration of these films to North America.

Nearly all of Fulci's horror entries are now available in one form or another – some great (*Seven Notes in Black*, *Zombie*, *City of the Living Dead*, *The Beyond*), some shocking (*New York Ripper*), some pure, wanton hacking (*Murder Rock*, *A Cat in the Brain*), but all worth watching at least once for their stand-alone strangeness.

Love him or hate him, this issue – along with Stephen Thrower, author of *Beyond Terror*, the definitive Fulci bible, Antonello Fulci and composer Fabio Frucci – we raise our blood-filled glasses in tribute to the jugular-spurting, maggot-flying, eye-pimpling, head drilling, weird and wonderful cinema of the late great Lucio Fulci (June 17, 1927 – March 13, 1996). Happy Halloween.

JY

jeronimak@mcne.org

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

RUE MORGUE

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COVER ZOMBIE

BY GARY PULLIN

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Post Mortem

QUESTIONS • COMMENTS • CRITICISM

THE FESTIVAL OF FEAR was one of the best weekends of my life, as it was for my wife and children, and one of the most delightful film elements (of many) was getting to know all the great people from Rue Morgue. I'll never forget the warmth, kindness and genuine with which [Rue Morgue Radio's] Chris Alexander and Feedback treated my five-year-old son, Alex. Kudos to all involved in planning and executing this awesome event.

Jeff Rego — New Bedford, Massachusetts

REGARDING MIKE'S *Mystery of Horror* episode: Should we be putting down Mick Garris and the *Moff* folks, or should we maybe even applaud them a little for knowing what is too much? I mean, *Moff* is on cable, but you just know a lot of impressionable youths are watching, and maybe it's okay to exercise a bit of good taste by not airing that particular episode. I'm not in favour of censorship, but I definitely approve of a little self-policing regarding art. I think *Moff* has done that, and I for one am not mad about it.

Paul Cunolis — Flint, Michigan.

JUST FROM THE PICTURES in your magazine, it appears that Takashi Miike is truly the master of horror. Those photos were grisly and now I am curious about his episode. The people of America are suppressed from viewing certain news events, movies and TV shows, that is why Imprint was banned in the USA — there is no true freedom of speech. The government saw the rape, needles, violence and torture and that was too much and decided the American audience does not need to see those types of things. We should be able to make our own decision on what we want to watch.

Paul Duke Roberts — address withheld

YOUR PIECE ON PETE WALKER came at exactly the right time, as I am just now discovering this auteur on DVD. Why this man's work never managed to penetrate the US mainstream is beyond me. I am sorry to learn that Walker does not own the rights to *House of the Long Shinbones*, as it means that someone

else out there is holding back this underated gem for some unknown reason. Even if it does run the risk of a Desi Arnaz Jr. career revival, set Vincent, Peter, Christopher, John and Sheila free, damn you!

Aaron Christensen — Chicago, Illinois

I ENJOYED THE ARTICLE on murder ballads (RM#59). Anyone else who did should rent or buy a copy of a DVD documentary called *Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus*. It's sort of a counterculture travelogue on life and music in the American South, with a strong emphasis on the macabre. The music of the Hambone Family is featured throughout, as well as other musicians, all of whom are carrying on the tradition of murder ballads.

Brooks Waldhart — address withheld

WHEN I FIRST GLANCED over the Gore-met's article on *Faces of Death* (RM#59) and the like, I grimaced. I thought I'd found yet another thoughtless fan of those wretched "films" that glorify death and suffering. Thankfully, what I found was a note from a human perspective, not an inexperienced posing teenager obsessed with what they think death is. I count on RM for several things, chief amongst them is maturity. Our beloved genre is crawling out of the swamp to stand shoulder to shoulder with the other "respectables." Rue Morgue is high on single-handedly making that happen. Bravo.

Jeremy Morris — address withheld

HUGE KUDOS and a hearty uuuu-haaa to Chris Alexander for his recent column on Jeff Wayne's *War of the Worlds*. I was a Hammer and Dr. Who-saturated nine-year-old when my dad snatched this wonderful album into his regular playlist and it had a profound effect on me. For a more contemporary take on the album, some of you may want to seek out *Uffa Dub Ulla* — the remix album — it's a whole lot of retro fun!

Neil Baker — San Jose, California

ALRIGHT MR. THORNTON, if that is your real name, what's your beef with Rob

Zombie? (Post Mortem #57, #58.) What's the guy ever done except make good, honest, dirty, escapist entertainment for headbangers on a budget? I won't argue the point with you as far as his originality. But you know, if it weren't for folks like Rob Zombie, those of us who weren't born with the knowledge of all things genre-like might never have discovered such wicked stuff like Santo the wrestler, Bela Lugosi, *White Zombie*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Living Dead Girl*, *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*, Sam Peckinpah, and the GOD ALMIGHTY Richard FREAKIN' Matheson! Appreciate the cat for the gateway drug that he is for those of us who don't know any better.

Matthew Sanders — Arlington, Texas

I WANT TO CONGRATULATE Rue Morgue on a job well done. I recently bought RM#58, and found any obnoxious comments published. It shows what a stand-up ballyhoo mag you are when you publish letters that are a bit challenging in their origin. Rue Morgue stands behind their readers and it shows.

Adam Thornton — Los Angeles, California

I'M A PRISONER in Hälset Prison, Jönköping, Sweden. I just received RM#56 and RM#57 from my friends in Ohio and I think that Rue Morgue is one of the best horror film magazines that I've ever read. Just brilliant! And I want more! We are allowed to read whatever we want in this prison, except for *High Times*. I want to subscribe for at least one year. It's gonna be cool to have something as nice as Rue Morgue to read during this prison sentence. I'm already addicted!

Ulf Bärgenhammar — Hälset Prison, Jönköping, Sweden

We encourage readers to send their comments via email or snail mail. Letters may be edited for length and content. Please send to www.ruemorgue.com/loc

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Dreadlines

News & Highlights



Horror Happenings

Custom designs from genre artists to highlight Living Dead Dolls exhibit

There may be only one thing more collectable than a mutant-faced zombie-child Living Dead Doll: a one-of-a-kind, custom mutant-faced zombie-child Living Dead Doll. The highly sought after horror-themed toy line – think undead children, vampire kiddies and other bloody tots – is designed exclusively by creators Damien Glonk and Ed Lang (*RM310*). Now, for the first time, they've opened the creative caskets to a select group. The duo has invited more than 100 artists to create their own versions of the ten-inch dolls, the results of which will be displayed at New York art gallery The Showroom NYC for a two-week exhibit beginning next month.

"We have Michael Dougherty, who wrote the script for *Superman Returns* and *X-Men 2*, Dan Bierer from *The Nostromo's* comic book and [actor] Seth Green [each] doing a doll," reveals Glonk, leaking a few names from the unreleased list of participants who were given a blank doll to work with. "Mostly, they are artists we like or are inspired by, people with similar interests. But none of the dolls have come in yet. It's going to be a surprise for everybody because we don't know what to expect."

The Living Dead Dolls first appeared in 1998 as handmade novelties, and were quickly snapped up by Mezco Toyz. They've become so popular that many of the designs regularly sell for hundreds of dollars on eBay, other companies have created their own horror-themed dolls, and some fans even sport Living Dead Dolls tattoos. The idea to do an exhibit was inspired by the Circus Punks doll line released by Toy Tokyo last year, which featured original toys crafted by a legion of artists.



LDD Art Show: Flyer artwork by Louis Rossman.

Artists participating in the Living Dead Dolls exhibit include painters, sculptors, photographers, special effects gurus, musicians, a stained glass expert and even *Rue Morgue's* own art director, Gary Pullin. They've all been commissioned to craft a doll, or an interpretation of a doll, using nothing but a blank figure and their twisted imaginations.

"We provided every artist with a blank doll, so they will be making everything else from scratch, providing hair and clothes, the paint deco, etc. Some artists won't be making a doll – they'll be making a painting or a drawing or something else like that," says Glonk.

Glonk claims the art show might become an annual event, and could feature submissions from the general public. Plus, while he says there are "no real plans" to mass pro-

duce any of the dolls submitted this year, some of them just might join the Living Dead Dolls line. Each unique doll from the exhibit will also be sold at a price ranging from a couple of hundred to a couple of thousand dollars, with some proceeds going to charity.

The exhibit runs November 1 to 14, Tuesday through Sunday at The Showroom NYC, located at 117 Second Avenue, 2nd floor, New York City. Admission is free.

For those unable to make it to see the Dead Dolls in person, the creations will be accessible for viewing and sale via the gallery's website, theshowroomnyc.com. A coffee-table book featuring photos of the custom toys and biographies of the artists is also being planned for release after the show.

Dawn Daler

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After Dark Film Festival makes debut in Toronto

With over 300,000 moviegoers, the Toronto International Film Festival is one of the world's most widely attended events of its kind. And with approximately 60 other film fests happening annually in town, Toronto is undoubtedly the film festival capital of the world. But while the *Midnight Madness* program at the TIFF has long been a veritable cinematic crack house for unrepentant genre junkies (along with the similarly titled *Midnight Mania* program at the Worldwide Short Film Festival), Toronto does not boast an annual festival devoted exclusively to genre films. Back in 1998, Montreal's *FanTasia* Festival enjoyed a phenomenal encore performance here in Hogtown but numerous logistical problems, messy politics and a lack of co-operation from a number of film producers prevented *FanTasia* from becoming an annual event in the city, denting what should have been a glorious highpoint on the Toronto film festival calendar.

But there is one T-Dot resident who's as mad as hell and not going to let it anymore. Meet Adam Lopez (a.k.a. The Mad Professor), a lifelong genre maniac and the bubbling brains behind the five-day Toronto After Dark Film Festival which, from October 20 through 24, will embark upon its maiden voyage at the legendary Bloor Cinema, the home of *Rue Morgue*'s very own monthly Cinematheque movie nights.

Lopez had his eyes opened to the world of genre film fests ten years ago at the Festival of Fantastic Films in Manchester, England. After moving to Toronto a few years later, he realized there was a dearth of local genre-focused film festivals. The idea to start his own came to him when he attended *FanTasia* last summer.

"I made the pilgrimage to Montreal. God! I was in indie and foreign genre heaven. And totally jealous," Lopez tells *Rue Morgue*. "How could Montreal have a horror and fantasy festival that awesome, and Toronto – the film festival capital of the world – nothing to compare?"

After putting together a dream team advisory board of film festival experts – including

Dreadlines



Night of the Living Dorks: Mathias Dinter's German zombie comedy

Colin Geddes (TIFF), Pierre Corbeil (*FanTasia*), Anita Wong (WWFF) and *Rue Morgue*'s President, Rodrigo Gudino – Lopez commissioned fellow genre fanatic Todd Brown (twitchfilm.net) as programming director, and together they set out to assemble an eyeball-punishing assortment of international sci-fi, horror, fantasy and cult movies with a large number of films making their Toronto, Canadian or even North American premieres.

"The biggest thrill for me is definitely having the North American premiere of Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Retribution*," explains Brown. "This will only have been seen in two other places – Sitges and Venice – before it gets to us and I'm a huge Kurosawa fan, so to say I'm excited to bring it to an audience here is an understatement."

Other festival highlights include Japan's *Shimobi* (Ten Shimoyama), Germany's *Night of the Living Dorks* (Mathias Dinter), Holland's *Sifm8* (Frank van Geloven and Edwin Visser) and the American post-modern slasher, *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* (Scott Glaserman, see *Rue* #52).

"I think *Behind the Mask* is one of the smartest films I've seen in ages and is a damn fine slasher pic to boot," adds program director Brown. "And old school slasher fans should really dig *Sifm8*."

Along with five straight nights of feature film frenzy, there will be numerous short film programs, gala parties, surprise musical guests, a full fledged downtown Toronto zombie walk and a genre filmmaking masterclass at the University of Toronto campus with a panel of filmmakers sharing war stories on the trials and tribulations of making independent genre films in North America.

"This ain't your momma's film festival," warns Lopez, "unless she's into Swedish vampires, German zombies or mad cowgirls. This is a film festival for diehard genre film fans who want to see something special and have fun."

For complete Toronto After Dark Film Festival information, schedules, ticket prices and the latest guest news, visit torontoafterdark.com.

Stuart Andrews



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comunicit.com

Roger Corman divulgues: The Corman Cult wants to indoctrinate you! The site, which boards news, polls, trivia, a members only message board and download for registered users, dares fans to take part in "challenges" that can score them cool Corman prizes. So, how well do you know The King of the B's?

exhumedfilms.com

The brainchild of four monster movie fans, Exhumed Films is a regular horror cinema night based out of Philadelphia's International House that shows double bills of classic, foreign and B-movie titles. Despite the site's eye-punching use of red text on black background, it's got the lowdown on the Philly fright flick scene.

whatthatsbug.com

Get a creepy crawly you just can't identify? We bet the folks at What's That Bug can. Search their extensive site — brimming with descriptions and high quality close-up photos — for your particular pest or submit your own image and info and have them identify it for you. Gross and engrossing.

dappercadaver.com/how-participate-a-3.html

Los Angeles, California retailer Dapper Cadaver has launched a campaign to get B-movie maverick Ed Wood, Jr. a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Visit the site to find out how you can get involved, and while you're there peruse their assortment of grisly props, clothing, toys and other horror home decor.

e-zombie.com

Imagine the undead dancing to the Village People's YMCA and you're halfway to imagining what this site is all about. Type in a name, sentence, or even your favorite curse word and watch as the zombies band and twist to spell out your entry. Times New Roamin' anyone?

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Compiled by Nancy S. Knapp
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Monster Engine to become online game for kids

It's been nearly a year since New Jersey painter and comic artist Dave Devries caught the art world completely off guard with the release of an unusual and brilliant book, *The Monster Engine: An Experiment With Children's Art (RMH53)*, a collection of illustrations in which Devries took children's crayon and marker sketches and rendered them in disturbing detail, using oils and pencil crayons to faithfully flesh out their creatures.

Unable to find a publisher willing to take a chance on such a quirky concept at the time, Devries released the book himself and watched as the fanfare and accolades rolled in, including a 2006 Independent Publisher Book Awards nomination for Most Original Concept.

Now the artist has decided to take the *Monster Engine* concept to the next level with an online video game that will bring his illustrations to life in an environment based entirely on the drawings of children. As Devries explains, he feels creativity is under attack in America's school system, and the game was born out of a desire to present an open and safe environment for children to express themselves artistically.

"In the US, they cut access to the arts left and right in the schools. There's this idea that art and creativity are not important, or at least not as important as math or science," Devries says. "So I originally wanted to make a social network for kids on the *Monster Engine* website, a place where kids can go and share drawings with other kids. But when I heard about online gaming, it sounded like a virtual world would be perfect for what I wanted to do: to create a place where kids can branch out, exercise their creative minds in a virtual world that exists outside the realm of budget cuts."

Though the project is still in its infancy and many details have yet to be ironed out, Devries says the game will allow players to control fully rendered 3-D models of monsters from his book, or build their own char-



Monster art inspired by Max Perales, age six

acters from a library of monster parts taken from children's drawings. Players will then be able to navigate their monster through an immersive and thoroughly customizable 3-D environment in which everything is sourced from children's art. Once the world is created, the player can build an "engine" that will act as a portal to other players' worlds, where monsters can interact with one another in common or player-created environments.

"I want this game to look astounding, and it's very important that kids are involved in terms of the content and characters," Devries explains. "We're going to base the game around an initial collection of drawings, and then we're going to go around to a bunch of schools and ask parents and teachers if their children want to donate a drawing for the game. In turn, we will donate a sum of money from the game's proceeds to that school's art program."

Devries ultimately hopes to have the game servers up and rolling in about two years, and he promises that the appropriate parental controls will be in place.

"Right now, we're still in the building phase, getting funding nailed down and finalizing the development team," he says. "But it's going to look amazing."

For a sneak peek at the project visit themonsterengine.com/video.html.

Chris Boutet

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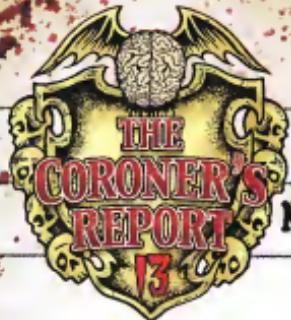
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Weird Stats Morbid Facts

• Seamen believe it to be bad luck to travel with a corpse aboard the ship; if they must transport a body, superstition dictates that it should lie aftwards (not lengthwise) with the ship and be removed before any other crew disembark.

• Stuntman Eddie Powell nearly died during the filming of the frozen meat scene in Terence Fisher's *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* after he found himself trapped under a slab of fake ice.

• An old legal custom in Scotland dictated that when a jury found someone guilty of a crime punishable by execution, the judge would douse a candle before announcing the death sentence.

• Aerosmith took the title of their early hit *Walk This Way* from a gag in *Young Frankenstein*.

• According to serial child killer and cannibal Albert Howard Fish (executed in 1936), "little girls have more flavour than boys."

• Don Cuscariello and his producing partner Paul Pepperman originally intended to adapt Ray Bradbury's novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes* for the screen but were informed by Bradbury himself that Michael Douglas had already bought the rights to it. Cuscariello and Pepperman made *Phantasm* instead.

• The first documented public human dissection occurred in Venice, Italy in 1308.

• The last movie for which Jim Henson personally oversaw creature effects was Nicholas Roeg's creepy filmic adaptation of Roald Dahl's *The Witches*.

• "Searchers" was the title given to 17th-century London, England parish workers who were charged with recording the causes of local deaths.

• Both Bela Lugosi and John Carradine turned down the role of Frankenstein's monster in the 1931 version of *Frankenstein*.

• Police arrested a New Jersey woman this past July after they found a hand and six human skulls on display in her home. At the time of her arrest, she refused to tell officers where she obtained the body parts.

• Lon Chaney Sr. (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Phantom of the Opera*) was born Alonso Chaney on April Fool's Day, 1883 to deaf-mute parents.

• In January 2003, a Russian man was sentenced to twelve years in prison after being found guilty of murdering his friend then mining and flavoring the corpse in preparation for consumption.

The Rue Morgue SICK TOP SIX



Instances of MOUTH MUTILATION



1. *The Beyond*

Fulci's tarantula tongue tickler

2. *Imprint*

Outrageous oral acupuncture

3. *Cutting Moments*

Steel wool lip gloss

4. *Mark of the Devil*

Witch trial tongue twister

5. *The Fly* (1986)

Acute mandibular relocation

6. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003)

Hoyt's backwoods bottle dentistry...



Compiled by Monica S. Kuebler and John M. Brown
Got a weird stat or morbid fact?
Send it through to info@rue-morgue.com

THE FIRST STOP ON THE ROAD TO HELL

FANGORIA TV says...
"in the style of the original
Dutch The Vanishing"
—Marka Newbarn

DEBUT FEATURE

From the Writer and Executive
Producer of *The X-Files*
and *Supernatural*

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— *The Vanishing*—
— *Many thanks, Frank*

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INTERVIEW WITH ANTONELLA
FULCI, HIS DAUGHTER AND
GUARDIAN OF HIS ESTATE.

LEGACY OF BLOOD AND DECAY

BY STEPHEN THROWER • INTERVIEW BY JOVANKA VUCKOVIC

Ten years ago, on the 13th of March, Lucio Fulci went to his final resting place: whether a beyond of some sort or simply the belly of the conqueror worm, who can say. Such a morbid sentence may seem an odd way to introduce a man's career, but death and the taint of the grave were constants in most of Fulci's films post-1966, and symbolize his best work. Besides, speculation about what lies on the other side of death came naturally to this troubled Catholic, who once said, "I am happier than somebody like [Luis] Buñuel who says he is looking for God. I have found Him in others' misery, and my torment is greater than Buñuel's. For I have realized that God is a god of suffering. I envy atheists; they don't have all these difficulties." (*L'Écran Fantastique*, 1982)

Intriguing stuff: but it was there, in Fulci's first widely distributed interview, that an aspect of his character emerged that still aggravates critics and moviegoers today: the willingness of the man who interviewing him to

spitler being shoved into a woman's eye in an extreme close-up (*Zombie*) to wax metaphysical about the nature of God and namedrop the greats of cinema has often been seen as pretentious. (As well as mentioning Buñuel in the *L'Écran* interview, he referenced filmmakers René Clair, John Huston, Alfred Hitchcock, and recounted a personal anecdote about Luchino Visconti.)

Yet Fulci did not claim to be as good a director as Buñuel or Hitchcock, and he was just as likely to wax rhapsodic over "lesser" figures like Mario Bava, Jacques Tourneur or Roger Corman. His highbrow frame of reference revealed a complex man who found his greatest calling, horror, relatively late in life, and sadly, working in the genre did not accord him the respect he felt he deserved. To a degree Fulci loved to "big himself up", but ego aside, he was a cultured man raised in a serious climate where "by work unceasing respect was to be given."

"[LUCIO FULCI] BELIEVED IN HELL ON EARTH MORE THAN HELL AS A TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC PLACE."

ANTONELLA FULCI

Lucio Fulci was born in Rome on June 17, 1927. After spending his teenage years studying medicine and dabbling in art criticism, he entered the prestigious Italian film school, the Centro Sperimentale, in the late 1940s. Upon receiving his diploma, Fulci enjoyed a successful career as scriptwriter in the 1950s and '60s for Italian comedy legends Totò and Alberto Sordi, and the popular duo Franco & Ciccio, before lurching into the darkness that would envelop his future career with the bleak western *Masacre 7mo* (1966) and the melancholy thriller *One On Top of the Other* (1969).

Propelled by a series of shattering personal losses, he engaged ever more deeply with the macabre, making major contributions to giallo (*A Lizard in a Woman's Skin*, 1971; *Don't Torture a Duckling*, 1972) and horror, beginning with *The Psychic* (1977) and stretching through a sustained peak of creativity (*Zombie*, 1979; *City of the Living Dead*, 1980; *The Black Cat*, 1981; *The Beyond*, 1981; *The House by the Cemetery*, 1981; *The New York Ripper*, 1982). Subsequently typecast as a horror filmmaker, Fulci continued in the genre until his death, although diminishing returns set in, from the lackluster *Asymmetria* (1987) to his last film, *Dear to Silence* (1991).

Today, Lucio Fulci is as likely to inspire passionate argument among horror fans as ever. Start a discussion about Fulci on any internet fan forum and the skirmishes will begin. Is he an artist or a hack? Genius or journeyman? Maestro or misogynist? The terms get wilder and more exaggerated, and it's not long before Dario Argento, the crown prince of Italian horror, is wheeled in for comparison. Argento the auteur versus Fulci the rip-off merchant; Fulci the genre chameleon versus Argento the stuck record; Fulci the master of corporeal decay versus Argento the ice-cold aesthete. And so on. If you like an argument, being a Fulci fan guarantees you plenty to work with.

As the edgy, challenging horror films of the 1970s are plundered for remakes, and horror homages far more slavish than any of Fulci's genre borrowings ride high in the *Valley* film lists, it surely won't be long before someone thinks to remake *The Beyond* or *Zombie* (although a Hollywood remake of *The New York Ripper* remains unlikely). You can be sure, though, that while the gore would be replicated and probably improved upon, and the ghouls made more elaborate, no 21st-century remake will ever capture the essence of Fulci — the attitude, the pessimism, the foreboding inevitability of death and horror, the extravagant pictorial grace amid the most grotesque eruptions of filth and decay. Because these things are unique to the man, if you want them, you go to him. In 50 years time, people will still be looking at the films of Lucio Fulci, arguing passionately for and against, some hating every gory minute, and others wishing, wishing, wishing, that he was still alive, making more of his extraordinary movies.

Antonella Fulci has her father's edge and her generation's ironic perspective. Like all relatives who guard the flame of a loved one, she has an unenviable task: to be herself and yet speak for the dead. Luckily, she wears it well; her opinions are as independent as her father could have wished, and her love for him is unassimilable. If Lucio has a legacy, it's as much her staunch individualism as the films themselves.

Antonella communes with Rue Morgue from her home in Italy for a frank and personal discussion about the late great Lucio Fulci.



Lucio Fulci was responsible for some of the most outrageous splatter set pieces in horror movie history and yet he had the reputation for being a pussycat in his personal life. Was he ever conflicted about some of the violence he unleashed onscreen?

I don't think so because for him the horror films were just one of the genres he worked in in his life. I think there's no connection at all between the violence you see in his films and himself. He never took too seriously what people said about his horror movies. There are many people all over the world who consider some of the symbols in his movies to be icons — like the book of Enoch in *The Beyond* — that have inspired people. They take it like something magic, Gothic, awkward — and my father never had this intention. Even with regard to the violence, it was his job and it was just part of his career.

He worked as an art critic before making the move into filmmaking. Did he view himself as an "artist"?
No, absolutely not. He always called himself an artisan of cinema. But he really liked art. He was an art critic and a journalist. He started his career writing and then writing screenplays so the beginning of his career was behind the scenes.

The first time you saw one of your father's gore films, did it affect the way you saw him?

Not at all. I was about twenty when he started making his films. I was often on the set of his films. It's like when you go visit your parents at work, it would go on set to visit



22 Catriona MacColl gets blasted by real maggots in *City of the Living Dead*.

my father, I got to be on the set for *Zombie*, on the beach on an island near Rome. I saw people in the makeup chairs with clay on their faces, the zombies. I got to watch the special effects guys work.

Speaking of zombies, Lucio's goriest golden age horrors relied heavily on Giannetto De Rossi's incredible prosthetic effects. What was their working relationship like?

They knew each other very well. Giannetto De Rossi was an assistant makeup effects artist in the past on other films. If I'm not wrong, in *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin*, the special effects were made by Carlo Ramaldi, but I think even back then Giannetto might

have done some work on that. But back to the zombies, when Giannetto was the official special effects maker, the idea of using natural materials to do the zombie makeup – the maggots are even real – it was De Rossi who thought this up and my father approved because it was a way of working that they had to make very complicated effects with very little money, so they used things that they could easily find. I think the idea was very functional and my father found something in it very brilliant because the zombies looked very natural with all that clay and mud on their faces. If someone made the maggots as a special effect it would have looked really fake, so they simply used real ones.

*Since we're talking about maggots, how did they do that scene in *City of the Living Dead* where the thousands of maggots come flying in through the window like a swarm? Ah, with a firehose and a fan behind it.*

Were they real maggots too?

Yes, they were real as well. [Laughs] Yes, I know it's disgusting!

Amazing! Did the actors know they were going to have real maggots fired into their mouths?

No, but I'm pretty sure some of the close-ups were made with rice. But I know that Catriona MacColl had this treatment with real maggots on her face. I don't think she liked that very much. Anyway the maggots were thrown all over the set very quickly and then they had to collect them all.

*After making light-hearted comedies in the 1960s, your father turned with great success to thrillers, including *One on Top of the Other*, *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin* and *Don't Torture a Duckling*. What motivated his*

change of style from light comedy to violent thrillers?

Even before the comedies he had made some thrillers so I think he was comfortable enough with the subject matter. In the '70s, in Italy, it was a genre that people loved. Before that it was the comedies and after the comedies people wanted to see horror films because they were seeing on video the films that were coming from the United States. Every Italian director during that period made at least one horror film or one thriller. So it happened that Enzo G. Castellari was given the screenplay but couldn't make it, so my father was the second choice. So he made the film and it was very successful.

*What do you say to the critics who accuse *Zombie* of being a rip-off of George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*?*

I think it's not true because it borrows more from *I Walked With a Zombie* – the classic zombies – instead of the Romero zombies, which are kind of modernized.

You're right, they don't even look the same aesthetically.

Exactly. My father, when people asked him about this matter, he said that his own zombies came out of voodoo and not from something that is in the modern world. They come from voodoo, from Haiti, from the old ceremonies, they are part of folklore. Romero's zombies were kind of a satire of modern society.

What was Lucio's relationship like with his Italian contemporaries, Argento and Bava?

Well, Mario Bava and my father were old, old friends from when Bava was a cinematographer and a set decorator. I have a picture of my father and Bava when they were on the set of who knows what film. They were close friends. My father considered him a genius long before other people discovered Bava. Dario Argento, no, they met shortly before my father's death.

*They were supposed to work together on *The Wax Mask*.*

Yes, they worked on the script, but my father died before they could start shooting. From what I saw, they didn't correspond with each other too well anyway.

He was often compared to Argento, sometimes unfavorably. Was Fulci ever angered by mainstream film critics, who dismissed his work and ideas?

In that environment it's normal that directors have something to say about each other but he was never really angered by it. He didn't see any similarity between his films and Argento's. There are a couple of films, two scenes, that are seen as really close to Argento's but the screenplays were not written by my father.



The New York Ripper: The primary reason that Fulci has been accused of misogyny.

Did he ever express a desire to do anything other than make movies?

Yes. Sailing on a boat. He was a keen sailor and if he could, he would have gone back and sailed as a job.

From *Zombie* onwards, or even earlier with *Seven Notes in Black*, your father often engaged with the supernatural in his films. What do you think attracted him to exploring the supernatural, and from where did he draw inspiration for these excursions?

He believed that the supernatural was not supernatural. He felt it had a great influence in everyone's life. He started exploring it because it was interesting to tell "normal" stories with a supernatural edge. Even in *Don't Torture a Duckling* you see a very magical story over a very simple reality, like a little place in southern Italy. For him it was a reality. For instance, when he lost something he would say, "I heard my mother tell me that" — whatever he had lost — "was in this place." And of course he would go there and it would be there.

Did he believe that a place like Hell could be real?

Not in a Catholic way. He was definitely scared of what could happen after his death, about what kind of experiences he might have. But he believed in Hell on Earth more than Hell as a traditional Catholic place.

Many devout fans of Fulci have dismissed his notorious 1982 picture *The New York Ripper* as being the sickest and most mean-spirited work in his canon, and to this day it has few defenders. What are your personal thoughts on this picture?

Well, I can't be very objective because I was on set for the whole thing and I had a lot of fun. You can see this movie from a lot of points of view. In my opinion this film is about losers. It takes place in a town where if you are not a winner, you don't

survive. There are no positive characters. Every one of them has a big problem. It's a sordid melodrama.

Fulci was accused of misogyny in his films — especially with regard to *The New York Ripper* — and was rumoured to be especially cruel to some of his actresses. Was this true, and if so, what light can you shed on his reasons?

A lot of people thought that because of my mother he started hating women, but they are wrong. People ask me this question often about his treatment of women because of Caterina MacColl and the maggots and because of Daniela Doria, who has to literally spit out her guts in *City of the Living Dead*, but he wasn't a misogynist. Sometimes it was his strange way of saying "I appreciate you." If he joked really heavy with someone, and that could include yelling, it meant that he liked you. You'd have to know him. If you didn't know him it might come off heavy, yes. In fact, I was watching something on TV recently in which Giannetto De Rosset was speaking about my father on the set of *Zombie*. He said that my father would start yelling and then laughing and if somebody that didn't know him heard this on the beach, they might think that he was crazy. About my father, there are many rumours. I really wish that all the people who liked his movies had a chance to meet him because he was one of a kind, morose in real life than in his movie career.

Of all the rumours that you've heard, which one would you most like to clear up?

I think maybe the ones who consider him the mentor of a strange cult. They're delusional because if they met him they'd find out that he was a big joker.

What is the real story behind his early exit from the *Zombie 3* shoot?

He was sick at the time and they were shooting in

BLACK GLOVES AND LEG WARMERS

MURDER ROCK (1984)

Starring Dina Kartabos, Ray Lovelace, and Cosimo Cinieri

Directed by Lucio Fulci

Written by Gianfranco Clerici

Roberto Giannini and Vincenzo Mannino

Shriek Show

After wading neck-deep into urban slime with the utterly vile and inane-spirited *New York Ripper*, Lucio Fulci waited two years before taking another stab at stalk 'n' slash cinema with this newly released, long-unseen thriller. Taking its stylistic cues from then-popular aerobic boogie films like *Residence and Perfect*, *Murder Rock* (a.k.a. *Shriekdance*, *Dancing Death*) is an astoundingly dated but thoroughly enjoyable murder mystery, punctuated by an unfortunate score by Keith Emerson (karma), dollops of female nudity, painted ponytail dreams, and a slick, pleasantly empty 80s aura.

At New York City's awkwardly puritanical Arts for Living Center, dance students sweat through their headbands trying to get their spandex-griped girdles in shape for their respective "big breaks." Between idleness, hideously choreographed Chorus Line-calibre body moves, select female rump shakers are murdered by yet another mysterious black-glove killer, this one brandishing a knife that's slowly pushed into victims' pants. As the bloody, bare-breasted, body-count rises, the police led by Ripper's Cosimo Cinieri are left baffled. Meanwhile, sexy Kartabos, the unlucky lass who had her eyeball skewered in Fulci's *zombi*, *Zombie*, is having trouble, all-too-real nightmares.

Those daunted by Fulci's standard gore delirium will no doubt be let down by *Murder Rock's* lack of explicit gore, and those who hated the 1980s will probably run for the hills. But beyond those conceits, it's actually a taut and accomplished little slice of giallo nastiness with good performances and impressive direction by the revered pit-slinger. Surprisingly, Shriek Show releases *Murder Rock* as a double-disc, featuring both Italian and English language tracks of the remastered negative, as well as a pretty involved doc on the man's work. Fulci himself once dismissed *Murder Rock* as "an above average American TV movie," and though he makes a point, you'd be hard-pressed to remember any telefilms with graphically pierced nipples. *Mamma Mia!*

Chris Alexander



A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE
TO FULCI'S WILDLY
UNEVEN GENRE
OUTPUT.



TOUCHES OF DEATH

THE HORROR FILMS OF LUCIO FULCI

by THE GORE-MET

LIZARD IN A WOMAN'S SKIN (1974)

SHRIEK SHOW

Although Fulci had previously dabbled in thrillers, this is his first full-fledged entry in the then wildly popular giallo genre. The socially conservative filmmaker scorns the sex 'n' drugs, free love era of the '60s. In this tale of a sexually confused housewife who may or may not have committed a murder, it features nudity, lesbianism and a fake castrated dog scene that landed the director and effects artist Carlo Rambaldi in Italian court.

DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING (1972)

ANCHOR BAY

Arguably the most well-crafted and personal film in his catalogue, *Duckling* is Fulci's scathing condemnation of the Catholic Church, government

and society. The "superstitious" community whipped up a story about child murder and pedophilia. Renzo Bakshi's heartbreaking chain-whip demise at the hands of a mob of ignorant villagers is the first glimpse of the violence, cruelty and gore that became the benchmarks of Fulci's later career.

SEVEN NOTES IN BLACK (1977)

ALFA DIGITAL

On the surface, Fulci's last kick at the giallo can proper is a middling but satisfying entry in a genre that was all but played out by the time of the film's release. Within the context of Fulci's filmography, it's his nascent horror film, bridging the gap between his earlier, well-regarded gialli and the gory glory yet to come. It features the first

assembly of the key collaborators in Fulci's horror oeuvre — writer Dario Argento, composer Ennio Morricone — and a microcosm of the aesthetics that would define his greatest films. The seeds of *House by the Cemetery* and *The Beyond* are found within.

ZOMBIE (1979)

ANCHOR BAY/BLUE UNDERGROUND/SHRIEK SHOW

Originally conceived as a quick cash-in on the success of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (titled *Zombie* in Italy, *Zombie* a.k.a. *Zombie 2*) is the late-life turning point in his career that transformed Fulci (then 52) from his destiny as a footnote in Italian fantastic cinema to a major player. *Zombie* is not only Fulci's best, most popular and influen-

tal horror outing; it's also the quintessential Italian splatter film. The iconic rotting zombie head poster, reproduced on the famous Wizard Video release in the early '80s, introduced Fulci to his most ardent and enduring audience: North American teenagers of the day.

CONTRABAND (1980)

BLUE UNDERGROUND

Fulci followed up *Zombie* with an exceedingly violent crime film, no doubt inspired by *The French Connection* (1971), which pits small-time Negro cigarette smugglers against a French drug cartel bent on using the "bluebeats" to bring heroin into Italy. Strong-arm tactics include rape, murder, kidnapping and torture (a woman gets her face burned off with a blowtorch); and ends in a bloody, slow-motion shootout that makes you wonder where John Woo got his bullet holes from.

CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD (1980)

ANCHOR BAY

Retitled *Gates of Hell* in North America, Fulci's second full-on horror film is perhaps his most popular after *Zombie*. More a collection of gruesome set pieces than a linear narrative, this film scores up some of most shocking, maggots-on-died-momentos in the Fulci canon. Once seen, Donela Donee earthing us her internal organs will leave as much impact on your psyche as the word "leather" uttered through John Mongeon's skull laser in the film. The experimental nature of the movie is off-putting to most, but as an exercise in atmosphere, it exists, and serves as a direct precursor to the most highly regarded of Fulci's films.

THE BLACK CAT (1981)

ANCHOR BAY

"Freely adapted" from the Poe story of the same title, this is the most under-appreciated of all of Fulci's horror output, dismissed by even the most indecent critics as being far too lack of overt gore. It's a stunner, as this is the most playful film of Fulci's 1979-82 "golden era." Safran's naming "cat camp" and comic book-like cinematography is nothing short of brilliant, but the film is cast in an entirely different light when one considers that star David Warbeck was once a candidate to replace Roger Moore as James Bond. With this in mind, the eventual fate of Warbeck's snarve, womanizing police inspector is hilarious.

THE BEYOND (1981)

ANCHOR BAY

The Beyond is the ultimate realization of the nightmare logic aesthetic Fulci first put forth in



Bob (Giovanni Frezza) nearly bites it in *House by the Cemetery* and (below) Emily (Coralie Alvarado) comes back from Hell in *The Beyond*.



THE HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY (1981)

ANCHOR BAY

Fulci's gruesome parent to the haunted house genre epitomized in films like *The Amityville Horror* (1979) and *The Shining* (1980), marks his first collaboration with Sacchetti, Frost and Safran. Dr. Frankenstein, the undead maniac lurking in the cellar of the titular house, was no small inspiration for Dr. Satan in *House of 1000 Corpses*, and the last twenty minutes of the film are absolutely hair-raising. The score, cinematography and art direction (read: screen-slant body parts) are the last great gasp of Fulci's career. This film is often cited as having the poorest dub job of any Italian film, with Giovanni Frezza's Bob character, in particular, the recipient of much fan ire.

THE NEW YORK RIPPER (1982)

ANCHOR BAY

Seemingly Fulci's hyper-violent answer to *Maniac* (1980), this critically reviled giallo/slasher hybrid

is the most notorious movie on his resume. Fulci was labelled a misogynist for the film's sleazy toe-fucking, eyeball-slashing, nipple-slicing take on gender politics. Unfortunately, Ripper's undermined by a duck-quacking killer, a hopelessly confused plot and a right groaner of a conclusion. By this time, it is readily apparent that Fulci's extended day in the sun was coming to a close.

MANHATTAN BABY (1982)

ANCHOR BAY

Manhattan Baby isn't as bad as most make it out to be, but it isn't as good as it could be, either. Though modelled after the supernatural archaeological adventure *The Awakening* (1980), star Christopher Connolly is no Charlton Heston. The film is well paced, features some striking cinematography by Guglielmo Mancori, especially in the *Exorcist*-styled opening, and has a solid, mostly original score by Fritz (that includes recycled musical cues from *The Beyond* and *City of the Living Dead*), but suffers heavily from ridiculous optical effects and some ludicrous plot machinations. Come on, time-travelling children?





Diamonds: *Witches* set a new record for a movie with the most gore per minute.

MURDER ROCK (1983)

SHRIEK SHOW

See sidebar (p. 19) for review.

AENIGMA (1987)

IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

An Italian/Yugoslavian co-production, *Aenigma* meets *Patrick* pastiche is modelled after the popular American slashers of the day, but is one of his better later films. It features a rigorously icky snail attack, a spot of gruesomely cannibalism and enough decapitated bodies to pacify the average Fulcophile, yet isn't the gorefest fans might expect. The cinematography is superb and the soundtrack is a fitting blend of overblown Gothic meadowma and '80s synth-so cheese.

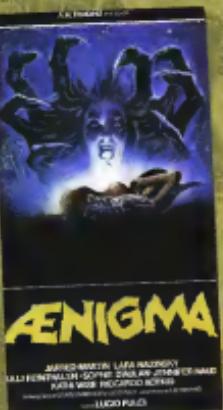
TOUCH OF DEATH (1988)

SHRIEK SHOW

Fulci, like any career-making author, so it's odd that he didn't choose to meld those two particular aspects of his career until this late in the game. *Touch of Death* (which Fulci also wrote) is an uporous, gory black comedy centred on a homicidal Lothario named Lester Parsons (great Hesley) who wops and ultimately dismembers (and occasionally dines on) homely but wealthy widows. The film is in the poorest of tastes (perhaps that's why it's so amusing) and didn't enjoy an official release until recently.

THE GHOSTS OF SODOM (1988)

This is Fulci's singular entry in the Nazisploitation subgenre. Though its opening sequence features



in Nazisploitation, the film is a flat, gorefest dud that has yet to receive a legitimate North American release.

ZOMBIE 2 (1988)

SHRIEK SHOW

The infamous pseudo-sequel to Fulci's highest profile film is fun for all the wrong reasons. The plot has a dandy loan stolen from an unidentified military installation wreaking typical zombie havos on the general populace. The resulting zombies are a mix of Fulci's shambling, rotting dead and zombies that run, leap, hop and even drop some kung fu on the protagonists. Fulci walked off the set owing health problems and the film was completed by notorious Italian backs Bruno Mattei and Claudio Fragasso. Fulci's contribution is the subject of eternal debate, with Fulci claiming that 75 minutes were his.

SWEET HOUSE OF HORRORS (1989)

SHRIEK SHOW

This is the first of two films Fulci made for Italian television and is the biggest embarrassment of his career. A young couple is murdered by an intruder and return to vengeance to look out for the best interests of their two children. The special effects are awful, the spectral parents are represented by something vaguely resembling flying-banana marshmallows, and, being shot on video, the film looks like crap.

THE HOUSE OF CLOCKS (1989)

SHRIEK SHOW

The second of Fulci's two made-for-television films fares better than the first, but not by much.

An elderly couple that collects clocks and indulges in occasional acts of murder is killed by intruders in a scene ripped off from the home invasion in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). Their dog holds the intruders inside the house as the clocks run in reverse and the couple return from the dead for revenge. Reportedly too gory for broadcast, it never aired.

A CAT IN THE BRAIN (1990)

BOX OFFICE SPECTACULARS (LASER DISC)

This film also known as *Alzheimer's Concert* has taken much stock among Fulci fans, but it's not only the best of his post-1982 output; it's likely the greatest film he ever made. Fulci stars as... Lied, a hoary, wheelchair-bound amnesiac-murderer trying to figure it out. His Fulci is torn over whether or not he's the man himself, and much sputter-bilious lunacy ensues. *She* also recycles footage and scenarios from *Touch of Death* and *Plants of Sodom* and makes some interesting observations on violence in film. Fulci later claimed that Wes Craven ripped this off for *New Nightmare* (1994).

DEMONIA (1990)

SHRIEK SHOW

This is the most ambitious of Fulci's later efforts, featuring kickbacks to gory grungs-on-in a 16th-century convent, and is the about the only film outside of *A Cat in the Brain* that even approaches the elegant gory grandeur of Fulci's most famous efforts. There isn't much going for the film – the plot, score and acting are weak – except for a few righteous satiation set pieces, especially the man ripped in half between two trees, that set *Demonia* apart from most of this era.

VOICES FROM BEYOND (1991)

IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT

Fulci wrote and directed, from his own short story, this supernatural shocker much in the vein of Poe's *The Facts In The Case Of M. Valdemar*. A wealthy businessman, who happens to be a right-bastard, dies of a mysterious internal hemorrhage and from beyond the grave urges his daughter to find the killer amongst his extended family. The gore effects, which mainly consist of time-lapse photography of a corpse rotting in a casket, are equally disgusting and laudable. The highlights include a dream sequence pan of fried eggs that turns into squishy eyeballs and more nudity than a typical Fulci film.

DOOR INTO SILENCE (1991)

Fulci's last gasp is an attempt at psychological horror in which a young man named Melvin is trapped in the traffic of a funeral procession. After a beautiful woman beckons him to follow, he's pursued by a sinister bear in a deadly race for his own life and sanity. Fulci opened his own door to silence shortly thereafter, and the film, having never been released to home video, remains an obscurity to this day. ☺



27

Bob (Giovanni Lombardo Radice) is punctured by a knife in *City of the Living Dead*, and (below) a clay-faced zombie in *Zombie 3*.

the Phillipine islands. He accepted it but his health was poor and he had to run away. I wasn't there but I heard that he had several big problems with the production because he thought it was far too low of a budget to complete the picture, so Claudio Fragasso and Bruno Matto finished the film. He always disliked the film, he always said, "It's not my film."

Lucio is revered and best remembered for his horror films. How did he feel about this legacy in his last years?

He discovered this very late. It's sad because he had just found out that he was very popular in the United States and Japan in the early '90s. He didn't have the time left to understand what he had become to so many people because he had bad luck and died really before the Internet exploded. Myself, I've found out more about my father's fandom on the 'net than he did. He really enjoyed going to New York in the five months before his death and he was very fond of the people, the fans that he met there. He was surprised by all of it but he enjoyed it.

Of all his films, which one was he most proud of?

He had three answers to this question. The three of them are: *Seven Notes In Black, Don't Torture a Duckling* and *Beatrice Cenci* – that is a lesser-known film he made in 1969. It's a historical tale of murder that happened in Italian history when the Pope was king. That little movie is a very cool story. Even last year there was a professor from a university that sent me an email and told me he showed the film to his class because he felt it was a legitimate historical reconstruction of the life and death of Beatrice Cenci.

Why were those his favourites?

Because I think they were his most personal. He worked very hard on making *Beatrice Cenci* a special picture and *Duckling* was a different kind of giallo; he could speak between the lines. He

could talk about his rage over the hypocrisy of the Church. And *Seven Notes* I think he liked because it was perfectly executed in a technical way. It's a forgotten film but everything about it is perfect, even Jennifer O'Neill was perfect in her role.

In the filmmaking world, is there a rightful successor to Lucio Fulci?

It depends and it's a hard question to answer... I don't know.

Many of us would be inclined to say no, that he was one of a kind and there will never be another Lucio Fulci.

Ah, I think that's the right answer, yes. Sometimes I see movies, like *Saint Hub*, where there are images that remind me of *The Beyond*, so I guess he has inspired many people in different creative environments but there is not one person in particular who could be considered a successor to my father.

One last question, was your father afraid of going into the beyond, Antonella?

Yes. A lot. A lot. Especially the lack of dying in a peaceful way. He was scared of dying because he was sick for many years, so he was obsessed with his own death. But in the end, that's life. You never know how you will die. You can only hope that you will have a very peaceful death, but it may not happen.



VOODOO DEATH SOUNDS

ZOMBIE OST

Fabio Frizzi

Beat Records

One of the essential elements of Lucio Fulci's films, which makes them so uniquely strange, memorable and exotic, is the music. While not the most complex or evocative of Fulci's scores, *Zombie* (a.k.a. *Zombi 2*) is perhaps his most famous. Fulci's staggeringly messy epic blends ultra-graphic flesh-eating with sunny island scenery to maximum alienation effect. Its oddball vibe called for a soundscape both dreamy and deadly, and Frizzi's score is both, sometimes within the same sanguinary stanza (see p.26 for more on *Fulci*).

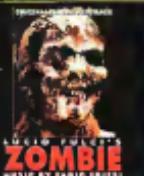
Admittedly, *Zombie* is an unofficial "sequel" to Romero's 1978 masterpiece *Day of the Dead*,

and the strains of *Sequence 6* (the last track on the album but the opening theme of the film) echo Gabin's influential pulsing score from Romero's movie. Sampled chanting and metronome beats give way to thundering progressive percussion freak-outs, and epic synth meanderings. In sequences 1, 2 and 3, tribal drumming loops and Moog slaps vie for sonic space with cheeky steel drum ensemble rhythms. It's all as bizarre and disorienting that one almost forgets that this is in fact music for long-dead maggots-eyed conglutinators and zombie-versus-stark insanity.

For those who adore Fulci's magnum opus, *Sequence 6* is Frizzi's crown jewel – the track underscoring the legendary swimming scene where Paola (Olga Karlatos) gets her pretty eye punctured by a bedazzled toilet seat and a slab of splintered door frame. Staring low and rumny, Frizzi's nail-biting number builds unbearably with squealing guitars and shrieking keyboards until... ummm. Drooling eye fluid never sounded so good.

For anyone truly interested in how to effectively and eccentrically score a horror film, Frizzi's work on *Zombie* is absolutely essential. Available in a rare import edition from Beat Records, with cues from Frizzi's equally great score for Fulci's oddball *A Cat in the Brain*, this is truly music for your most rotten spaghetti splatter nightmares.

Chris Alexander





From the moment Lucio Fulci pierced a woman's eye in *Zombie*, his role as director was essentially sadistic, with the viewer as willing, demanding masochist. Presented here are four brutal sequences essential to understanding the Master of Gore.

SPLATTER SET PIECES

DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING (1972)

VILLAGE CEMETERY, EXTERIOR, DAY. Florinda Bolkan plays a witch wrongly accused of child murders in a backwards village, who is tortured by the police without charge. However, the villagers refuse to accept her innocence, instead following her to a beautiful cemetery where they savagely beat her to death.

This breathtaking sequence is one of the most powerful and skilfully directed of Fulci's entire repertoire. Everything comes together: Bolkan's amazing performance as the damsel but autoerotically proud witch, the early morning sun-bleached locales, the gut-wrenching savagery of the violence, and that mix not only for Fulci but the horror genre in general, a prolonged lingering on the victim after the violence has ended.

An uptempo soul track plays over the ariously graphic chain-whipping, and a sentimental ballad soars over the aftermath, anticipating the ironic strategies of Quentin Tarantino's most ardent devotees. Fulci, whose *Rolling Thunder* company re-released *The Beyond* theatrically in the USA, Fulci was always alert to the power of music, as his work with the brilliant Fabio Frizzi (*City of the Living Dead*, *The Beyond*) showed. *Duckling* benefits from a wonderful score by Riz Ortolani (*Mondo Cannibale*, *Cannibal Holocaust*), one that sends a shadow of fear scudding across the greenery and sunblaze of the images.

For fans of Fulci's zombie movies, the attackers bear a haunting resemblance to the zombie legions that beset the director's later films, as they loom from behind walls and amble slowly toward their victim. And of course the brutal chain-whipping would return in the prologue of *The Beyond*.

Perhaps most notable of all is the final shot of this sequence, with Bolkan lying dead in the foreground and motorway traffic whizzing by in the background, which highlights modern Italy's indifference to its peasant back-

waters. Fulci as social critic? It's a role that, with the possible exception of *The New York Ripper*, can scarcely be discerned in his later work.

It's easy to mock Fulci's occasional self-importance, but *Duckling* shows us a man engaged with contemporary reality in a way that resonates beyond genre, and it's a glimpse of the filmmaker he could have been if his genius for sensationalism had not overwhelmed his other talents.

ZOMBIE (1979)

MENARD RESIDENCE, INTERIOR, DAY. Our four heroes arrive at the house of Mrs. Menard and stumble upon a charnel-house tableau that Hieronymus Bosch would have envied. It's all over for Mrs. Menard, of course — we saw her skewered earlier in the film's most infamous sequence — but what makes this all-you-can-eat luncheon memorable is the detail.

The first gruesome sight is a hand, not severed but somehow separated from the body, perched on a chair arm as if the flesh has given way from putrefaction. There's a zombie chewing match from the victim's leg, and another ladding a handful of slimy jello from her body cavity. You'll notice that the zombies look downward, heads bowed, as if their horrific decay and physical abjection somehow shames them. The zombie eating a

liquefied liver is so slumped over that he seems about to smash the organ to his forehead.

Perhaps the most repugnant moment, though, comes when another ghoul seizes a finger-pinch of gore from Mrs. Menard's wrist; the texture of the flesh is as clotted and amorphous as congealed gravy.

A wide shot of four ghouls sitting around the *film* like a family on some miserable apocalyptic picnic emphasizes the hopeless, enervated, literally deserted nature of these monsters. Far from the snarling ogres of recent zombiedom, these "bodies without souls" are as disturbing for their weird passivity as their eating habits. Fuchs' take on the genre emphasizes physical disgust, as the advertising for the last US video release states: "The oozing putrefied savor of *Zombie* makes *Dawn of the Dead* look like *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*!" The road in *Zombie* looks as if they took to high heaven; it's a movie you would never want to see in Small-e-rama.

One more thing – usually in zombie films, if you're dead, you're off the menu. So is Mrs. Menard still alive? We see her eyes, apparently sightless, but as the ghoul snatches at her flesh, perhaps she's still conscious?

CITY OF THE LIVING DEAD (1980)

UNIVERSITY CITY, KANSAS. To use a surfing term, this is one of Fuchs' most "mugged" set pieces. The camera swoops ominously behind a parked Landrover, and we see Tommy (Belmonte) and Michele (Sawin) in an early action-reaction masking out in classic stalker fashion with Fuchs' regular whipping girl Daniels (Dana as Rose).

As the couple get down they're interrupted by the recently deceased priest, Father Thomas, whose malevolent gaze triggers a chain of events so sick that no filmmaker had conceived its like before. Rose's eyes stream with blood. Rose bubbles from her lips. Then – in a sickly edited and gore-meticulously dubbed outpouring – her entire intestines tract pushes from her mouth. Going further out, with the inexcusable logic of a really bad dream, the intestine is followed by her stomach (presumably inside out) along with an unidentifiable lump of entrail – the bowel perhaps, or a passing liver. Whatever, it's all a bit too much for poor Tommy, who retches in sympathy in the adjoining seat until put out of his misery by the priest, who grabs a fistful handful of his skull and brains.

To see this scene for the first time is to feel a giddy euphoria. From here on anything can happen. Tedium, muddiness, like plausibility or taste will not trouble us again. Fuchs's great contribution to horror was to marry the visceral charge of the zombie film to the anything-goes fantasy of the supernatural. Once Howard's dead start working he has no further use for the irrational – instead, his films explore the material world's reactions. For Fuchs, the supernatural opens a door to another cinematic world, more surreal than material; a



Fuchs's Fouldest Moments: An all-you-can-eat buffet in *Zombie*, (below) nipple trauma in *The New York Ripper*, and (left) phallic-style gore in *Don't Torture a Duckling*.

appell that perhaps only John Carpenter's *Phantom* (1979) had embraced before.

Finally, notice how the gut-vomiting scene comes after Tommy Ereaks kisses Rose and fondles her breasts. Fuchs follows this relatively chaste adolescent fumbling not with the panting kafu of the slasher movie, but with an excess of what Tommy actually wanted: by the time the lovers' tryst is over, he has seen more of his girlfriend's insides than he'd anticipated in his wildest, wettest dreams.

THE NEW YORK RIPPER (1982)

NEW YORK APARTMENT, INTERIOR, DAY. Starting with a shot of a razor blade caressing a girl's stomach, Fuchs delivers his mostgory ever set piece in a film – one so extreme it has outraged not only the usual suspects but many hardcore fans of the genre. What may actually be Fuchs' best giallo murder scene can have even his most devoted fans playing Saint Peter and denying the Master.

The killer slices up "Kitty", a prostitute (Daniela Dorin again), sending the audio of the slaying via walkie-talkie to the cop (Jack Palance) who's been sleeping with her. Healey knows who the victim is, but he's afraid to reveal his involvement to his colleagues. The scene is really about three shots (in reverse order of importance): a slit up the "pvtail", a slice through an eyeball, and the money

shot, a razor blade slicing through a nipple, in tight close-up. It's a perfect image that refines the writer's punishment of female desire: bisecting the erect nipple in has to be erect) for its symbolic castration of the desiring self.

In the sensual whiplash of *The New York Ripper*, everyone is a thrill-seeker, and Fuchs uses this to forge a sneaky connection with us, his thrill-seeking audience. With an unforgettable image of violence, Fuchs sought to engender the shock and awe demanded by his sensation-hungry fans. That poor abused nipple "stands" for us, the jaded horror consumer, demanding spectacle and stimulation.

However, Fuchs misjudged the mood of the market, with *New York Ripper* alienating many who found his giddy take on sexual violence too noisy. Never mind that similarly brutal tales had battered women in Fuchs's work before; something about the grisly realism and bad-tempered tone encouraged viewers to conflate the killer's attitude with that of the director. Rumours of Fuchs' poor treatment of actresses added to the impression that this Jewish film somehow grew from a misogyny in his own

skin. Whether coincidental or not, his career would never recover. $\ddot{\circ}$





Composer Fabio Frizzi crafted some of the most recognizable and chilling horror scores in Lucio Fulci's filmography. A riff with Italy's legendary corpse-music conductor.

MAESTRO OF THE MACABRE

BY CHRIS ALEXANDER

Sounds of chainsaws, chains, flesh, apes, monkeys and blood are the order of the day – join them, their full-groove. With the *Alucinante* (1973) piercing, gut-baring and head-dyin' being the order of the day for Italian horror guru Lucio Fulci, the task of scoring his films was often handed to veteran European cinema composer Fabio Frizzi. Starting with the烈western *Riot of the Apocalypse* (1979) and ending with the

darkly surreal *Death in the Living* (1985), Frizzi scored numerous Fulci features, including the director's gothic-age gorycomics *Zombie*, *The Gates of Hell* and *The Beyond*, literally lulling on a collage of spacey electronic prog rock and heart-pounding symphonic terror in equally breathtaking measures. This underrated maestro of the macabre reminisces about working with the legendary director.

How did you meet Lucio Fulci?

I was 24 years old, had little experience and a great deal of enthusiasm. During that time, I was working on a lot of projects, born in collaboration with Franco Brizi and Vincenzo Tempesta. We got a proposal to write the music for *Riot of the Apocalypse*, an important production including Italian and international actors. Lucio Fulci did the directing. It was a very challenging work, the idea being a commentary made up of songs, and it required the writing of a great deal of music. Lucio made an excellent film, and here began our collaboration and friendship.

Your compositions for Fulci's films are mainly a mix of light music and rock/progressive electronics. What influenced this style?

My formation has been very uneven: my favourite composer is definitely J.S. Bach and I have an enormous love of the baroque. But I've grown up accompanied by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Simon & Garfunkel, Zappa and Pink Floyd. Overall, endless contaminations. Mike Oldfield's [The *Exorcist*] influence in all horror music in the mid-'70s and afterwards is [also] very evident.

Zombie is often described as the birth of Italian gore cinema. What was your initial

reaction when you sat down to compose the music for a scene where a piece of wood is rammed into an eye?

The idea came from the final scene of the Beatles' 'A Day In The Life': a regular bass pulsation, much like on tom-toms, the bass on top of a note in fixed octaves, bass and keyboards that rise, rise, in a dissonance crescendo. I created something similar, but the percussionist had been drinking a little at dinner and it was difficult to get him to stop laughing. Then when the bass was in order we superimposed it with a screaming guitar, constantly getting higher, higher.

Fulci had a reputation for being a tyrant during his production. Is this true?

There exists a time for play and a time for work. All of that is combined with a person's character. Lucio was a special type, an entertaining companion during periods of relaxation, a friend to whom you could genuinely vent about your problems. But he loved his work very much and he knew that a director must above all be a leader.

How would you describe your working relationship with Fulci?

Our working relationship had always been intense. Having spent my youth in the first pro-

jects, Lucio's judgment often caused me great anxiety as to whether the themes and arrangements were to his liking or less. But his appreciation always remains with me, and this is very important.

Recently, *Quarantine* used your music in *Kill Bill: Volume 2*.

It's a wonderful surprise and evokes a strong emotion. I knew that Tarantino is a cult worshiner of those films, of the musical pieces. But I didn't know anything about *KWV* until the last minute, and to hear the beautiful theme of *Seven Nights in Black* once again, which I gave birth to, utilized so successfully by one of the greats of today's cinema, pleased me and my co-composers, Brizi and Tempesta, a great deal.

Are there directors with whom you would like to work with in the future?

Too much of my work is for television, composing music for TV movies and fiction. Cinema is going through a lengthy difficult time, most of all Italian cinema. A pipe dream of mine is to experience a professional adventure outside of Italy. Why not in the United States? I have so much experience, yet my enthusiasm is always what it was, unwavering. *

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IN THEATRES OCTOBER 4TH

Why not turn off the television and curl up
with a terrifying tome? In service, we hereby present...

The Connoisseur's Guide to 50 Alternative Horror Books



Reviews by Dave Alexander, John W. Bowes, Gemin- Fides,
Richard Givin, The Gaze- met, James Grainger, Sandra Kastor,
Monica S. Kuebler, Brett Alexander Savory and Jozsaka Vuokko

There's no denying that literary fiction is the root of modern horror as we know it. Some of the most compelling films, games, musical works, etc., are inspired by novels and short stories – some popular and others so obscure and out-of-print it's near impossible to track down even the most dog-eared copy. Of course, they don't all get adapted, so you'd have to be a dedicated reader to appreciate the diverse terrors that the written word has to offer. Just as there is a collector culture for imported, rare and special edition DVDs, there's one for books: small press editions, centuries-old leather-bound tomes, first edition hardcovers, you name it.

This time last year *Rue Morgue* brought you a list of 100 alternative horror films – titles you may have overlooked but that every horror film connoisseur should seek out. Now we do the same for genre literature. Like that list, we've worked hard to avoid the mainstream titles to bring you what we feel is a diverse sampling of the best in alternative horror fiction. You won't find Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, Stephen King or any of the other usual icons here, but you will discover a mixture of writers old and new, some strictly horror, others making a singular trek into the genre's rocky terrain, and even a few somewhat recognizable genre scribes with strong titles that have been overshadowed by their more popular works. Likewise, some of the books push boundaries, while others have inspired generations of writers. Some may not qualify as literary masterpieces but are notable for taking a bughy original approach to a time-worn tale, and others, quite frankly, are simply must-reads, with no more justification than: dare to see for yourself!

Narrowing it down to 50 entries has been no small feat. Entries could be a novel, novella or a collection of stories by a single author. Not everyone will agree with all our choices and some will feel that we omitted some much more deserving titles. That said, allow us to present to you a primer and launching point for over two centuries worth of overlooked, perfect-bound gems – along with some relevant book jacket quotes – as chosen by our dedicated team of obsessed readers.

The Monk (1795)

Matthew Lewis

Written in a white heat when Lewis was only nineteen, *The Monk* is a steam-driven merry-go-round of offhand blasphemy, moral hypocrisy, prurient sexual deviance and sheer Gothic excess. Complex to the point of goofiness, *The Monk* juxtaposes grisly gore with, as Stephen King notes in *Danse Macabre*, what often seems like mere repetitions of the word "bosom" than any book ever published.



The Tales of Hoffmann (1821)

E.T.A. Hoffmann

Best known for his story *The Nutcracker* and *The Mouse King* (the basis for The Nutcracker ballet), German author E.T.A. Hoffmann was also a brilliant pioneer of dark fiction. In this collection of his best stories, Hoffmann takes classic motifs from German folk tales and Romantic novels and twists them into surreal tales of obsession, perverse desire and outright horror.

Le Chants de Malibar (1868)

Comte de Lautreamont

"It is not right that everyone should read the pages which follow; only a few will be able to savour this bitter fruit." So begins this unflinching and totally bizarre novel of hallucinatory horror, unveiling the worldview of its genuinely depraved narrator. *Malibor* is one of the rare examples of a novel that manages to mutate virtually every aspect of setting, character and plot into nightmarish distortions. As the book wages war with human logic and strives for a total derangement of the senses, Lautreamont mercilessly depicts a parade of pedophiles, freaks, murderers and monsters. That both author and narrator seem to be gleefully wallowing in so much terror, misanthropy and woe makes *Malibor* too caustic for most readers. Decreed "lost" for many years, the text was eventually resurrected by the painters of the original Surrealist movement and has gone on to inspire every-

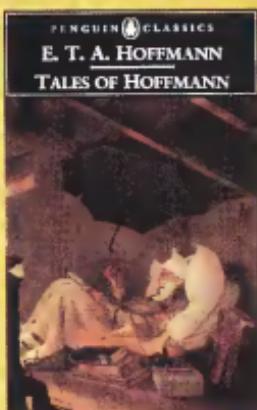
The Great God Pan (1894)

Arthur Machen

There's really no adequate way to describe the overwhelming strangeness of this novel: Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (RM450), which tells the tale of a medical experiment that unleashes a god-like entity with unquenchable sexual desires into late-Victorian London, is another high point of the English Decadent movement. Not to mention, it had a major influence on Lovecraft, Cive



Arthur Machen



one from acclaimed genre artists such as Harry O. Morris to industrial rockers Skinny Puppy

In a Glass Darkly (1872)

Sheridan LeFanu

Besides Poe, no author is more responsible for rescuing the English-language ghost story from the conventions of Victorian fiction than Irish writer Sheridan LeFanu. The five lengthy stories comprising *In a Glass Darkly* boldly relocate the source of our deepest fears to the human mind, anticipating the 20th-century revolution in psychological horror fiction. The collection also marks the first

The House on the Borderland (1908)

William Hope Hodgson

No less an authority than Lovecraft himself called *The House on the Borderland* a "classic of the first order", and although the novel clocks in at under 200 pages, it does not suffer for lack of ambition. William

Hope Hodgson blends elements of horror, science fiction and dark fantasy to tell what at first appears to be a classic haunted house story set on a crumbling family estate in 19th-century Ireland, but quickly evolves into something much more complex. When the lone occupant of

the mansion suddenly comes under siege by a race of pig-like humanoids, he decides to fight back and eventually pursues the creatures to their lair, which turns out to be an interdimensional portal not bound to Newtonian laws of time and space. The novel is often noted solely for its impact on Lovecraft, who incorporated its odd blend of dread, speculative science and cosmic conspiracy theories into his own work, but its originality and apocalyptic imagery make it a certifiable classic in its own right.

appearance of a fictional paranormal investigator, à la Kolehak and *The X-Files*

Là-Bas (1891)

J.K. Huysmans

A masterpiece of dark fiction from the tastily decadent Decadent literary movement that shocked 19th-century Europe, this unapologetically grim novel revels in blasphemy, Black Masses and the life of notorious child killer Gilles des Rais. *Là-Bas* is additionally noteworthy for Huysmans' trademark rich prose.

The King in Yellow (1895)

Robert W. Chambers

A peculiar and mesmerizing blend of romance, horror, and mythology set mostly in the bohemian quarter of Paris, the stories in *The King in Yellow* are connected by a plot conceit familiar to any horror movie fan: the discovery of a mysterious book that causes the death and/or madness of all who read it. But Chambers wrote this disturbing classic in the early 1890s, putting him about 100 years ahead of his time.

Kwaidan (1904)

Lafcadio Hearn

Elegant, spooky and haunting, this collection of traditional Japanese ghost stories by ex-pat Japanophile Lafcadio Hearn has launched a thousand J-horror films, including the grand daddy of them all, Masaki Kobayashi's classic *Kwaidan*. If you've ever wondered where all those long-haired ghost girls got their start, look no further.

The Trial (1919)

Franz Kafka

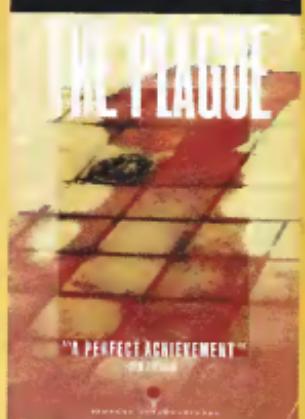
In this ultimate existential horror novel, we see Joseph K. arrested and put on trial for a crime he did not commit. What's worse is the fact that the authorities refuse to tell K. any details of the crime he's charged with. The 300-page nightmare probes our often irrational need for order, as well as the role of the individual in society. We know you read it in university, but take another look at this unfinished work by Kafka; you'll be surprised by its chilling – and often oddly hilarious – prose.

The Plague (1947)

Albert Camus

Borrowing some of his philosophy from the Existentialist movement, Albert Camus spent many of his professional years concerned with human suffering in a hostile, indifferent world. In *The Plague*, he describes in graphic detail a grim vision of human suffering at the hands of a brutal

ALBERT CAMUS



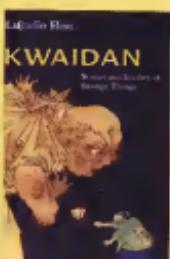
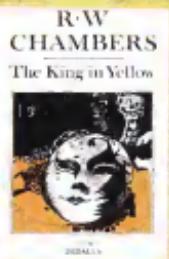
"A PERFECT ACHIEVEMENT"

epidemic (a bubonic plague) that disproportionately sweeps into the fictional Algerian port city of Oran, violently taking out much of its population. In the quarantined city only loneliness, despair and death await a populace who once took their lives for granted. Though the end of the book poses a positive question about how the individual can change or reflect a change in society as a whole, *The Plague* remains a harrowing literary masterpiece.

Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination (1956)

Edogawa Rampo

Though his pen name is derived from the Japanese pronunciation of "Edgar Allan Poe", Ifurita Taro is one of the most original and influential horror writers to emerge from the Far East. The bulk of his work has yet to be translated, but this English-language collection (RM#34) showcases Rampo's power with erotic-themed classics like the body transmutation-themed *The*



Caterpillar and the brilliantly twisted The Human Chair.

Dine Horrors and a Dream (1958)

Joseph Payne Brennan

Brennan was a macabre poet who ventured into short fiction for primarily commercial reasons, but his vision and sparing use of language made for some very rich horror tales, such as *Caravan's Backyard*, in which an elderly accountant discovers that his property has the power to draw visitors into infinite and horrific dimensions. With stories steeped in cosmic atmosphere and gloom, Brennan remains one of the most talented yet obscure authors of 20th-century weird tales.

A Scent of New-Mown Hay (1958)

John Blackburn

In chapter one, an entire Russian village is excised from the face of the earth to stem the spread of some unknown contagion, by chapter three, some unsuspecting British sailors discover exactly how ineffective said excision really was – which takes us up to page 33, exactly. Slim but devastatingly effective, the book combines John Le Carré's Cold War angst with John Wyndham's speculative fiction creep, positing a biological plague (first tested through Nazi concentration camp experiments) that turns ordinary people into walking fungal spore factories. It's a short trip, yet hardly a merry one. Like classic *Doctor Who*, this often stiff, contrived and coincidence-ridden plot moves like a bat out of hell, shed-

ding dreadfulness every step of the way. While there's no gore, it still leaves most modern apocalyptic scenarios flashing. Blackburn's aim seems to be to take a quiet, logical look at just how easily the world can end, especially when nobody's looking, and he succeeds admirably. Then again, maybe he just wants to scare the pants off us.

The Owl Service (1967)

Alan Garner

While his books are primarily marketed to children, Garner is one of those authors who readers return to regardless of age. *The Owl Service* lures us to rural Wales and its peculiar legends. The action is literally and figuratively a building thunderstorm, as a tragic tale from the past repeats itself in one of the most unusual hauntings in fiction. You may never view your dinner plates the same way again.

Picnic at Hanging Rock (1967)

Jean Lindsay

On Valentine's Day, 1900, a group of private school girls in Victoria, Australia's Mt. Macedon region go for a picnic that ends in tragedy when three pupils and a teacher go missing after climbing a rock. Author Jean Lindsay never reveals the mystery of what happened to the four, which prompted the publication of a book of hypothetical solutions by Yvonne Rousseau in 1980. The "eighth chapter", written but excised from the book by the author, was published

Blackbriar (1972)

William Sleator

Very few writers can make the British countryside and woods seem even more claustrophobic than the city of London, but William Sleator – known for his young adult books – proves his uncanny ability with *Blackbriar*, a tale of witch cults, plague houses and hauntings. The novel's tension builds extracuriously as young Danny is dragged by his guardian Philippa from their tiny apartment to the isolated country house, Blackbriar. Without electricity or even running water, life is rougher than Danny expects, especially having to bring coal up from the increasingly sinister cellar. And what's the meaning of the carved list of names and dates on the ancient wooden door? And why is Danny having strange dreams of arcane rituals centered around the nearby barren hills and their Neolithic grave mounds?

Danny tries to figure out the secrets and history of Blackbriar and the surrounding area, while wondering who has his best interests at heart... and who is seeking to harm him. The E.P. Dutton edition of *Blackbriar* is particularly notable, with Blair Lent's black and white illustrations, which, even when depicting modern scenes, have the feel of deranged woodcuts made by some feverish medieval monk.



Blackbriar

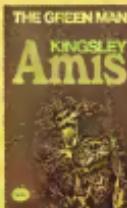
WILLIAM SLEATOR

after Lindsay's death, which in turn prompted more questions than answers. One of the first "based on a true story" ruses, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* remains a chilling and essential read.

The Green Man (1969)

Kingsley Amis

Best known for his satirical, urbane comedies of manners, *The Green Man* is Amis' only foray into horror fiction, which is a shame because he demonstrates an uncanny knack for describing the seemingly mundane but increasingly creepy events that lead a widowed innkeeper to conclude that his hotel is haunted by an 18th-century sorcerer with a taste for teenage flesh.



Zothique (1970)

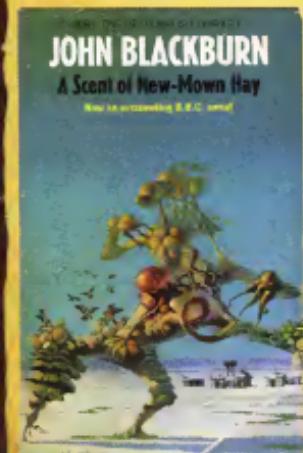
Clark Ashton Smith

A member of the Lovecraft circle, Smith envisioned a very distant future, one where science failed and the world fell into twilight. Zothique is a land of sorcery, pagan gods, monsters and sin, and Smith's prose is some of the finest (and most baroque) ever written.

All Heads Turn When the Hunt Goes By (1977)

John Farris

Providing pretty good rationale for staying the hell out of the American South, uneven yet undeniably powerful writer Farris uses hallucinogenic shifts in tone and a



Voice of Our Shadow (1983)

Jonathan Carroll

Voice of Our Shadow, like most of Jonathan Carroll's novels, contains the elements of juxtaposition of

ecstasy and horror, and one of his favorite tropes: this is a omniscient narrator. It's also the ultimate example of how Carroll likes to completely fuck with his audience. The reality-shattering reversal that takes place near the book's conclusion leaves readers forced to reconsider everything that has previously occurred in the narrative. Often funny, quirky and charming, this story of a young man's friendship with a sophisticated and fascinating married couple in Vienna, piles an abrupt left turn midway into a fantastical landscape that strays farther and further into one of those inseparable nightmares that wake you up at 2 AM wondering whom you can trust.

JONATHAN
CARROLL

VOICE OF OUR
SHADOW



drop from the trees. David Schow calls this "the finest modern sexual horror novel yet written", which fits. Misogynistic? Probably. Effective? Hell yeah.

The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)

Angela Carter

"The tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no poet that is not reciprocal. The lamb must learn to run with the tigers." So too must the reader learn to run with Carter in her elegant and lyrical flights of fancy as she turns some of the more gory-filled fairy tales (like Bluebeard) inside out. Carter writes so beautifully that even the most dreadful happenings seem like something viewed through cut glass – exquisite, but blinding and dangerous.

San Diego Lightfoot Sue and Other Stories (1979)

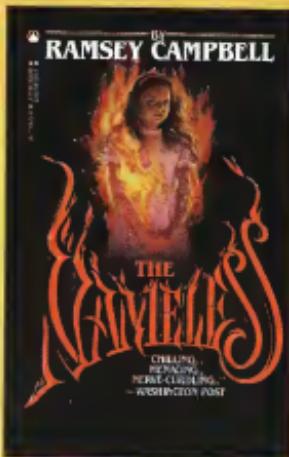
Tom Reamy

Posthumously published, this is one of the finest short story collections in the English language. Savage, cruel, funny and downright strange, often all in the same piece, Reamy's tales evoke sympathy for even the vilest of protagonists. The title story, about beautifully damaged people living in the darker side of Hollywood and the pacts they make with the devil (literally and figuratively), is particularly heart-breaking.

The Totem (1979)

David Morrell

David Morrell is a master of implication and misdirection, using his trademark sudden shifts in POV to rewrite our brains for maximum fear input long before we've even noticed him doing it. At its Arctic best, *The Totem* demonstrates exactly how



CHILLING...
HORROR-CURLING...
—WASHINGTON POST

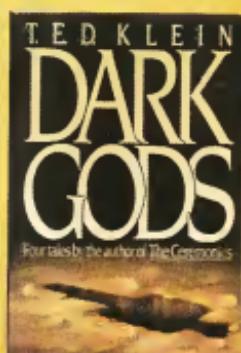
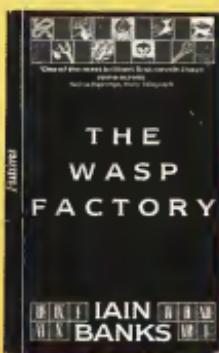
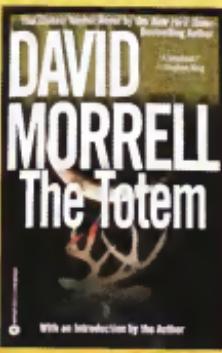
thin that skin of civilization which keeps us all from reverting to Cro-Magnon atavism is, especially when something frothing at the mouth wants to puncture it.

The Nameless (1981)

Ramsey Campbell

Despite the critical acclaim he's garnered within horror circles, Campbell has never won the larger mainstream respect and fanbase he so rightfully deserves. His chilling and almost unbearably suspenseful novel *The Nameless* – adapted as a Spanish language film in 1999 – follows the desperate quest of a mother who once believed her young daughter was abducted and murdered, but now suspects she's still alive and has been held captive for years by a terrible, malevolent cult.

funk of sensual detail to paint some very disturbing pictures. Among them, a half-sunken riverboat turned swampland voodoo temple, and poisonous snakes that



The Wasp Factory (1984)

Iain Banks

Controversy from the day of its release, *The Wasp Factory* is one of those largely misunderstood novels that everyone has heard of but few have actually read. Despite being somewhat less shocking two decades later, the book's violence, sadism and ultimate first-person look into the world of a young psychopath continues to resonate.

Dark Gods (1985)

T.E.D. Klein

In an era of slasher flicks and splatter-punk, Klein (then the fiction editor of *Twilight Zone Magazine*) showed us that a whisper in the dark can be infinitely more effective than an axe to the face with this collection of four immaculate novellas. The climax of Petey, where a housewarming party is crashed by an unhidden guest, is guaranteed to have you checking over your shoulder.

Song of Ra (1985)

Dan Simmons

Most fans of prolific, multi-genre author Simmons' early horror might cite *Carrie* or *Carrie*, his psychic vampire epic, as his best work. But this heart-of-darkness tour through Calcutta's underbelly is the real deal – uncompromising on every level. General exoticism and nihilistic creep aside, its last scene alone will pull your stomach out through your mouth.

Why Not You and I? (1987)

Karl Edward Wagner

From the 1970s until his untimely death in 1994, Wagner enjoyed a reputation for being one of horror's finest anthology editors. That's because the man understood the art of the horror story inside and out, and with this collection of his own tales, he showed many lesser writers how it was done. These stories are slick, emotionally charged, eerie and utterly enthralling.

By Bizarre Hands (1989)

Joe R. Lansdale

Emerging during the '80s horror lit boom, Lansdale (*Bubba Ho-Tep*) became a cult sensation largely due to the strength of this early collection. *By Bizarre Hands* is pretty much non-stop hard (and strikingly original) horror and suspense spiked with his knack for absurd situations. Best: Bram Stoker Award-winner *The Night They Missed The Horror Show*, *Tight Little Stitches In A Dead Man's Back* and the blackly hilarious title tale.

The Howling Man (a.k.a Charles Beaumont Selected Stories, 1988)

Charles Beaumont

His teleplays comprised some of the original *Twilight Zone*'s strongest episodes, and he channelled Poe and Lovecraft onto the silver screen for Roger Corman in the '60s, but Charles Beaumont was also one of the most innovative and talented writers of the "California Sorcerers" group. Obsessed with the macabre from a very young age, Beaumont siphoned many of the painful experiences of his much-too-brief life into his art (*Mess Gentilbelle*, in which a young boy suffers horrific maternal abuse, including having his pets murdered, is just one harrowing example). Beaumont also helped rescue the horror story from the conventions of Gothic romance by aligning humanity's timeless fears of death and the unknown with the anxieties of modern urban existence, shunning "dark 'n' stormy" atmosphere in favour of swift plot lines and straightforward prose. In his tales, the powers of darkness work in conjunction with the contemporary world, rather than in spite of it. He seems to be arguing that modern urban sprawls and cutting-edge science were no more effective than holy water and prayer books. *The Howling Man* is, as of this writing, the most complete collection of his short fiction available and comes with our highest recommendation.



"[Jonathan] Carroll's work is unlike any other's. When you start one of his novels or short stories, your every instinct is going to lead you in the wrong direction – sooner rather than later, the book or story is going to turn itself inside out and leave you gasping."

Peter Straub

Songs of a Dead Dreamer (1989)

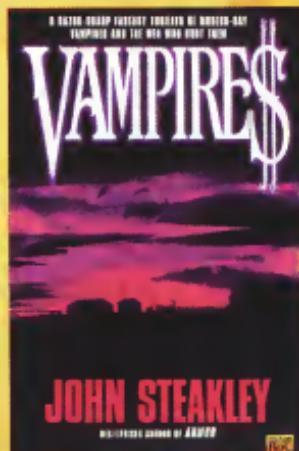
Thomas Ligotti

Considered by many to be the only rightful heir to Lovecraft's legacy, Thomas Ligotti's (*RM#48*) lavish tales of cosmic horror remain unique in the genre. This debut collection from 1989, which introduced the world to Ligotti's blistinely nihilistic worldview and enigmatic prose, has only gotten better with age.

Vampires (1990)

John Steakley

With dialogue right out of an '80s TV action series and a John Wayne caricature for a hero, *Vampires* is far from a literary masterpiece, but its pulpy fast-paced plot about a hard-chunkin', nihilistic vampire hunter version of *The A-Team* takes the tired genre for a gritty and original spin. John Carpenter's laughable film adaptation missed the best parts – such as a vamp



Skin (1993)

Katja Koja

When a reclusive female sculptor meets a body modification-obsessed dancer (also female), their obsessive relationship sparks a series of ever more elaborate - and dangerous - performance pieces. While her earlier novels (*The Cypher*, *Bad Brains*) might best be described as metaphysical explorations of the state of living with mental illness, filtered through a series of vaguely supernatural or simply surreal events, here Koja keeps her horrors strictly down-to-earth. She seizes on the 1990s underground industrial culture clichés of extreme body modification and robots-who-kill fleshshows, then twists them to their absolute outer limits. But *Skin*'s heart of darkness is, above all, a human one; its characters share a desperate longing to touch, a yearning to merge beyond differentiation, which makes this book the literary equivalent of those self-mutilating valentines the characters keep on sending each other - looks good, but you better not touch, for fear of getting something that could spread. Koja's dense, elliptical stream-of-consciousness style can be equally hard to penetrate, extricate yourself from... or forget.

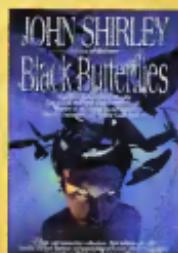


infested police station cleared out via a cocktail of pig's blood and hard drugs. An antidote to namby-pamby Anne Rice-style bloodsuckers.

Willing (1992)

Melanie Tem

With a menstrual blood-soaked intensity that both anticipates and outshines anything the *Ginger Snaps* series came up with, Tem peels the Anne Rice glamour off a very different supernatural subculture. In fact, her



"[Tim Lucas'] *Throat Sprockets* searches for and locates and defines the terrors that dance seductively behind the bliss of cinema. Disturbing and sophisticated. It's also genuinely kinky, perverse and smart."

Bret Easton Ellis

uniformly hate-crazed all-female cast of werewolves wouldn't stand still long enough to be interviewed, let alone have the vocabulary or the inclination to make it worth anybody's while. Yet there's a horndy poetry in every infectious bite.

Throat Sprockets (1994)

Tim Lucas

Our hero, in search of poem, accidentally catches some sort of heavily spliced softcore instead, after which he finds he can only achieve orgasm by biting a girl's neck. He's been infected with a Cronenbergian viral fetish, apparently spread by visual input via the book's titular film, *Throat Sprockets*. Better known as *Video Watchdog* magazine's obsessive creator, Tim Lucas understands intimately how horror fans can feel both drawn to watch the unwatchable and sure that doing so will somehow soul their souls.

The Matrix (1994)

Jonathan Aycliffe

Cold and quiet as a walking corpse, Jonathan Aycliffe's best M. R. James pastiche to date begins when a recently widowed ac-

adem studying modern-day witchcraft picks up the wrong book, thus beginning a slow but immersive journey into total moral degeneration. As with most of Aycliffe's novels, we're left with an impression that terrible things lie in wait around every dark corner, and that our own failure to meet them is due to nothing more than mere blind chance.

The Elementals (1995)

Michael McDowell

Best known for writing the *Beverly Hills* screenplay, it's Michael McDowell's out-of-print novels that make him a true hidden horror treasure. When a funeral reunites two Southern families in *The Elementals*, heroine India McCray discovers that while each family gets a house to itself, the third house is occupied by other utterly malign things. Spite photography, forgotten history and hoodoo black magic gruesomeness complete this unforgettable bleak tale.

Black Butterflies (1998)

John Shirley

One of the originators of the cyberpunk movement, John Shirley has also had an

equally productive career writing horror. Though not as widely read as they should be, his novels and short fiction create a potent cocktail of social commentary, dripping gore and disturbing, unforgettable imagery. *Black Butterflies*, a collection of short stories, exemplifies Shirley's unapologetic, maverick style.

Cows (1998)

Matthew Stokoe

Dark, repellent, visceral and just plain nasty. Though not intended for the horror set, few genre readers could make it through Matthew Stokoe's *Cows* without being thoroughly disturbed and downright disgusted. Be prepared for shit-eating and cow-fucking extrordinaire in this bizarre tale.

Pontypool Changes Everything (1998)

Tony Burgess

Canadian author Tony Burgess crafts a complex tale about a nasty, zombie-like virus that spreads through verbal terms of endearment. A laboured, surreal read but worth the effort for its unique narrative and deeply unsettling outcome.

The Collected Strange Stories (1999)

Robert Aickman

Cryptic, terrifying, pessimistic and without equal — Robert Aickman's stories are all of these things and more. From the 1940s through to the '80s, Aickman single-handedly broke the mould of the modern ghost story and created some truly strange-yet-convincing tales, including *Ravissante*, *The Trans* and *Into The Wood*. This recent collection should be considered essential reading for all ghost story connoisseurs.

The Descent (1999)

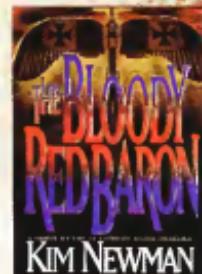
Jeff Long

As the startling news that Hell is an actual place full of not-exactly-people-who-wish-

The Bloody Red Baron (1995)

Kim Newman

Proving the value in diversity, Kim Newman is a respected British genre critic and author of several books on horror in film and literature, as well as a numerous works of horror and gamer fiction (as Jack Yovil). *The Bloody Red Baron* is the scribe's follow-up to *Anno Dracula*, an earlier novel that rewrote the end of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to see the vampire not only prevail against Van Helsing but alter the course of British history. Now, 30 years on, near the end of the First World War, Dracula is a shadowy figure in the court of Kaiser Wilhelm II. With the aid of a eugenically bred vampiric Flying Circus headed by Baron von Richtofen, Dracula prepares a final, horrific assault on the western front in a bid to crush the Allies and reclaim the throne of Britannia. Newman has created a vivid alternate universe here, populated by fictional, literary and historical figures, as well as an elaborate and unconventional vampire mythos. *Baron* is highly recommended for its thrilling aerial dogfights, gory trench warfare, and lots and lots of blood.



"John Shirley is an adventurer, returning from dark and troubled regions with visionary tales to tell. I heartily recommend a journey with John Shirley at your side."

Clive Barker

us-unutterable-harm spreads across the Earth's surface, the US responds (naturally enough) by declaring full-scale Vietnam-style war on Those Below. Long's mixture of concise, semi-poetic flow and academic-level research skills pulls his readers along like subterranean undertow. This is some damned brutal stuff.

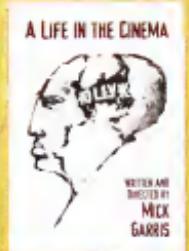
A Life in the Cinema (2000)

Mick Garris

A Life in the Cinema is a collection of fearlessly perverse (or perversely fearless) offerings from *Masters of Horror* creator Mick Garris — surprised? Warning: one jaw-dropping passage, involving a particularly

COWS

THE NOVEL BY MATTHEW STOKOE



House of Leaves (2000)

Mark Z. Danielewski

In this challenging and intriguing work, Mark Z. Danielewski weaves a complex tale of horrific horror told through the lens of a palimpsest – a manuscript written over many times, with footnotes from its writer. Essentially two tales, the piece is divided between the horror story and the notes of the manuscript's editor, Johnny Truant, who discovered and stole the pages from its author, a blind eccentric named Zampanò, after his death. The monograph concerns a documentary film called The Navidson Report, in which Pulitzer Prize-winning news photographer Will Navidson and his family take up residence in a supernatural Virginia mansion and discover its inner dimensions measure more than its exterior. Countless hallways and closets appear as the house continually reconfigures itself. It's seemingly alive, and eventually drives an expedition team, lead by Navidson, to madness and murder. Meanwhile, Truant, who works in a tattoo shop by day, by night inexplicably finds and sleeps with every woman who helped Zampanò draw up the manuscript. While the Truant notes offer little in the way of insight to the mysterious mechanics of the dwelling, the manuscript itself is a frightening cerebral horror story, littered with poems, photographs, scratched-out notes, alternate sub-quotes, and more. Without doubt, *House of Leaves* is a complicated book, but well worth the effort it takes to calculate its tale. It's also the singular cover story we've ever done on a novel at *Rue Morgue*. "Nuff said."



"[Tom Piccirilli's] *A Choir of Ill Children* is everything a great horror should be – beautifully written, ingeniously plotted, richly atmospheric, and single-mindedly devoted to delivering an uncompromising nightmarish vision."

Thomas Ligotti

A Choir of Ill Children (2003)

Tom Piccirilli

Haunting and unbelievably lyrical, *A Choir of Ill Children* infuses Piccirilli's (Rue46) exceptionally poetic and literate style with all the strange occurrences, bizarre characters, physical deformities and supernatural intrigue one expects in a Southern Gothic yarn. A familial tale of a swampland community in decline, it's stunning and unforgettable. Expect to become hopelessly lost in these pages.

The Fear Report (2004)

Elizabeth Massie

Massie balances a delicate narrative voice with an unflinching eye for grisly detail in this hefty volume containing cutting-edge tales that probe the monster in man. Stephen, a Grand Guignol love story involving an emotionally abused nurse and an amputee who is little more than a head and torso hooked-up to a life-support system, remains one of the most unserving novellas in contemporary horror. ☀

A Choir of Ill Children

by Tom Piccirilli



nearly impossible to describe novel gets weird and weirder until the reader turns the pages, slack-jawed, wondering where the hell it's going next. Literary horror at its absolute finest.

The Straw Men (2001)

Michael Marshall

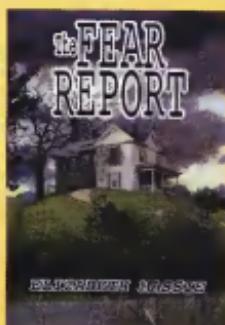
(a.k.a. Michael Marshall Smith)

Declared a masterpiece by Stephen King, this stunningly fierce serial killer book concerns a bizarre ancient cult called the "The Straw Men", which has members who consider themselves to be above other human beings. Marshall succeeds here in concocting a strongly written paranoid's nightmare, and this is only the first book in the trilogy!

Under the Skin (2000)

Michel Faber

The jacket copy on this book declares that it's a novel that defies categorization, and for once the blurb doesn't lie. Parts mystery, thriller, horror, and science fiction, it's an exceedingly well-written story that flirts with the unreliable narrator device to superb effect. This totally bizarre,



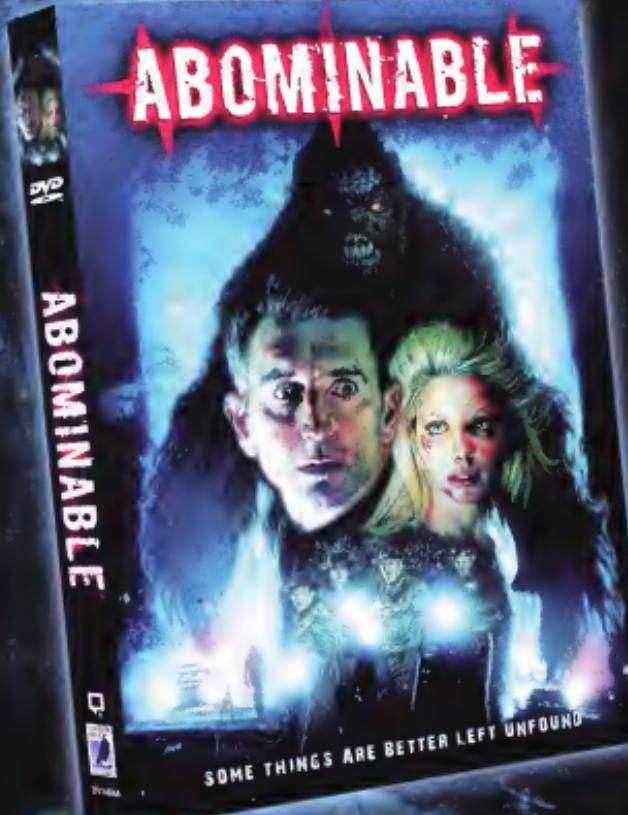
ABOMINABLE

"Scary, Freaky & A Damn Hellavalot of Fun!"

— Harry Knowles, Ain't It Cool News

"The best serious fright film ever made about Bigfoot!"

— Fangoria



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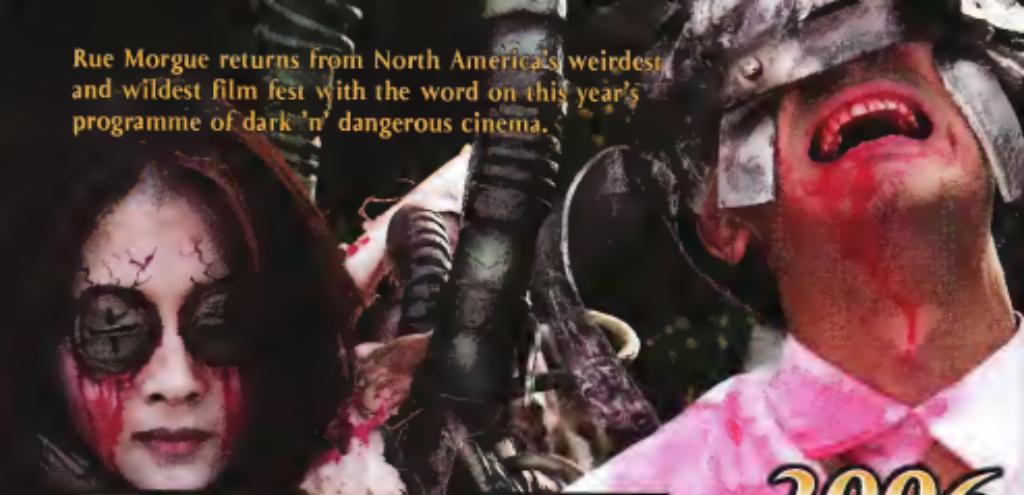
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Rue Morgue returns from North America's weirdest and wildest film fest with the word on this year's programme of dark 'n' dangerous cinema.

2006 Fantasia FESTIVAL WRAP UP

by Jovanka Vuckovic

Whether it was afternoon or midnight, rain or shine, blood-thirsty hordes lined up for their daily cinematic treats at the tenth annual Fantasia film festival in Montreal. A fright flick, lover's dream, the fest boasted genre notables like Sion Sono (*Suicide Club*), Lucky McKee (*May*) and Gary Sherman (*Dead & Buried*), who could be seen floating around, preparing to introduce their new movies.

Though the eighteen-day festival offers the best in fantastic and risky Asian cinema, a large part of the programme is focused on horror – from across the globe. This year's genre buffet had something for everyone, from ultra-low-budget shockers like Sherman's *39: A Film by Carroll McKane* to the UK survivalist vehicles *Broken* (Simon Boyes and Adam Mason) and *The Wilderness* (Michael J. Bassett), to Christiane Cegavsek's macabre animated fairy-tale *Blood Tea* and *Red String*, to the Jack

Kelchum-inspired carnage of Chris Siverson's *The Lost*, plus bloody vampire flicks (*Frostbite*, *Vampire Cop Ricky*), spookhouse fun (*The Gravedancers*), modern Frankenstein tales (*Subject Two*), requisite zombie films (*Tokyo Zombie*, *Zombie Self Defense Force*), off-the-wall gross-outs (*Neighbourhood Watch*, *Meatball Machine*), and art house weirdness (*The Living and the Dead*, *Strange Circus*). The features were also bolstered by Fantasia's impressive number of short films (see sidebar).

As always, the fest was a mixed bag of cult classics-in-waiting and flicks destined for straight-to-DVD purgatory but all enjoyable because of Fantasia's unpretentious, movie-lovin' crowd. Below is a list featuring some of the horror offerings destined to show up on – and in many cases just under – the radar in the coming year.

Reviews by Dave Alexander, Stuart Andrews, Todd Brown, Maria DeGiglio-Bellemsre and Jovanka Vuckovic

39: A FILM BY CARROLL MCKANE

Gary Sherman – USA

Directed by Gary Sherman (*Raw Meat, Dead and Buried*, *Poltergeist II*), *39: A Film by Carroll McKane* takes the viewer on a first-hand tour through the tormented psyche of a serial murderer. Its voyeuristic cameras, incessantly trained and retrained on their narcissistic subject, Carroll (Martin Cummins), recall Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960), the Belgian horror-comedy *Man Bites Dog* (1992) and Julian

Richards' *The Last Horror Movie* (2003), all of which possess a snuff-style aesthetic. Of course, we've seen all this before but this time it's the film's subject (a complex killer who uses a supposed expert in his field to achieve fame and martyrdom through self-orchestrated capture à la David Fincher's *Se7en*), not its violence, which gives it merit. Make no mistake, *39* is a graphic and unsettling movie, but it doesn't rely on object depravity or exploitative gore to distract. No, this one's by Carroll McKane, who's far too obsessed with himself to let his victims take centre stage. JV

ALONE WITH HER

Eric Nicholas – USA

Falling somewhere between *Fatal Attraction*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *One Hour Photo* and *Psycho*, Eric Nicholas' second feature is an unsettling tale of modern espionage horror that stars Mexico actress Ana Claudia Talancón as Amy, a beautiful but lonely woman recovering from a bad breakup. Unbeknownst to her, she's the target of an obsessive stalker named Doug Jarvis (played

who's broken into her apartment and installed an elaborate system of sophisticated electronic surveillance. The entire story is told through Doug's cameras, which serve to implicate the audience in his crimes. Characters are deliberately photographed clumsily out of frame to capture the video voyeur aesthetic, which gives the viewer a sense of Doug's frustration as we strain to see what Amy's up to off-camera. It's a deliberate ruse that gives this unique thriller a razor-sharp edge that's especially terrifying for female viewers. JV

ARTHOUSE ULTRAMAN

Takashi Miike, Akio Jissoji and Takashi Yagi – Japan

FanTasia is just not FanTasia without a kick-ass Japanese monster flick. This year the festival presented a programme of four *Ultraman Max* TV episodes, two of which were directed by Takashi Miike. The first Miike episode is a hilarious depiction of silly one-eyed semi-cat monsters that zap human memories, causing Ultraman to bumble around trying to remember how to fight. The second is an obvious critique of the so-called War on Terror. The episode's monster is created by the violence inflicted upon it and can only be stopped by a blind girl who plays the flute. Miike, the king of ultra-violence is here promoting peace! MDB

BAD BLOOD

Tiago Guedes and Frederico Serra – Portugal

When the J-horror boom broke in North America, it found success largely because it took its subjects seriously, and Portugal's *Bad Blood* succeeds for exactly the same reason. No teen gawking or winking at the camera here, just an immaculate script, flawless performances and a quality eye behind the camera. When a successful, academic family leaves the big city to take possession of an inherited country estate, they may as well be moving to another planet as they're plunged into a world of superstition where guilt spans generations and exorcisms are not uncommon. With its emphasis on atmosphere and character over banging and crashing, *Bad Blood* isn't the sort of film that will leave you riding a wave of adrenaline, but the slow burn will linger for days. TB

BLOOD TEA AND RED STRING

Christiane Cegavskie – USA

Thirteen years in the making, this DIY 16mm stop-motion animation feature is a visual treat. Part fairy tale, part political allegory, the film tells the story of a trio of simple, furry, bird-like creatures on a journey to rescue a human-like doll stolen by a gang of aristocratic mice with red eyes. The visual landscape is carefully handcrafted by the filmmaker, borrowing from the universe of fairy tales with touches of the

BROKEN

Simon Beales and Adam Mason – UK

As is typical of the survivalist subgenre, women are the exclusive target of *Broken's* deranged killer – a nameless survivalist (Eric Cuthill) eking out an existence in an anonymous sprawling woodland. After kidnapping single mother Hope (Nadja Brand) and her daughter (Abbey String), he shackles Hope to a post in the woods and proceeds to test her will and humanity by subjecting her to a litany of humiliations and torture. *Broken* is a micro-budget film, but it manages at times to create an even higher level of discomfort than many of its big-budget cinematic brethren. Fans of guerrilla-style cruel cinema will embrace it, particularly the film's opening sequence, a *Saw*-style set-up in which a woman must literally do a gut-check to free herself from a precarious trap. JV



macabre and the surreal. With no dialogue, deliberate pacing, and an understated soundtrack, it's not for everyone, but Cegavskie instills her narrative with a poetic sensibility that is both moving and engrossing. MDB

THE DESCENDANT

Philippe Spurrell – Canada

Montreal indie filmmaker Philippe Spurrell has crafted a cinematic rarity: a genuinely moving chiller. Four years in the making, shot in luxurious 35mm and showcasing a beautifully melancholic score, the film attempts to unearth the oppressive history of a small rural town in Quebec. James (Iainq McMahon) visits his grandparents in order to learn more about his deceased mother, but finds more than he bargained for. This could have easily been made into a documentary, but Spurrell opts for a quiet ghost story instead, reminding us that genre filmmaking can focus on socio-political concerns and remain captivating. MDB

FROSTBITE

Anders Banke – Sweden

Sweden's first ever vampire flick is destined to be remembered for exploring a thoroughly bizarre and hilarious tangent of the bloodsucker mythos: that newly converted hemoglobin guzzlers can converse with pet dogs. In *Frostbite*, an enterprising group of youngsters come into possession of a bag of designer drugs swiped from the local hospital. What they don't realize is that the pills contain infected vampire blood and were created by a mad geneticist

hell-bent on conducting undead experiments on human subjects. Needless to say, Sweden's wildest and bloodiest night rave ensues, and as the country is about to plunge headlong into its annual 30 days of polar night, the fun promises to endure for quite some time. Owing a great deal to Peter Jackson's *Dead Alive* (there's even a perverse use of a garden gnome which is undoubtedly a tribute to Jackson's notorious splatterpiece), *Frostbite* is a bona fide crowd-pleaser peppered with enough moments of real wit to raise it a notch above its general level of wanton ridiculousness. SA

Frostbite



THE GRAVEDANCERS

Mike Mendez - USA

If Disney made a Haunted Mansion ride for adults, this would be the movie version. A slightly goofy premise chock full of nasty ghosts, creepy graveyards, shrieking corpses and bursting coffins, *The Gravedancers* plays out like *The Frighteners* meets *Poltergeist* with elements of *The Entity*. Three grieving friends go to a cemetery after the funeral of a close pal and find a mysterious note that urges them to dance on the graves of (unbenownst to them) the city's worst criminals. Naturally, it's a curse, and, naturally, the spirits vow revenge. While the spooks themselves could have used more thought (they all sort of look the same), overall the movie is a fun crowd-pleaser with genuine scares. Recommended with popcorn and no natural light. JW



GOD'S LEFT HAND, DEVIL'S RIGHT HAND

Shusuke Kaneko - Japan

Based on a story by manga legend Kazuo Umezu, Shusuke Kaneko's low-budget film takes the serial killer story for a supernatural fairytale spin. A boy with the power to foresee murders slips into a coma, where he directs his sister – via a broken telephone – to catch a child murderer living in a cottage in the woods. Despite an amusing and nasty kids-versus-killers bloodsoaked ending, the build-up is rather mundane, resulting in a story that doesn't survive the transition from print to screen. DA

HELL

Tanit Jitnukul and Sathit Praditsam
- Thailand

When warned this movie would be taking us into the deepest pits of a Buddhist Hell, the Rue Crew was giddy with delight. *Hell* – allegedly a loose remake of the 1960 Japanese masterpiece of the same name, by Nobuo Nakagawa (RM#60) – sadly didn't deliver on expectations. An attractive and irritating cast of one-dimensional characters comprising a documentary film crew are creamed by a truck en route to a film location. While in ICU, their souls (which we're incessantly reminded must repent for their sins lest they spend spiritual retirement

swimming in a lake of fire) end up in Hell, an absurd place where badly made-up demons mash people with paper mache mallets and viewers are tortured by the worst CGI imaginable. A hackneyed, repetitive mess of an ending makes this one a hell to sit through. JW

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

Simon Rumley - UK

In an art house spin on the Old Dark House subgenre, Simon Rumley's *The Living and the Dead* takes us into Longleath, a decaying English mansion inhabited by a decaying aristocratic family: patriarch Donald (Roger Lloyd-Pack), his bedridden wife Nancy (Kate Fahy), and their mentally challenged, highly unstable schizophrenic son James (Leo Bill). Donald goes out of town for a business trip and a sense of immediate dread permeates when James shuts out his mother's homecare nurse, takes the phone off the hook and proceeds to terrorize the frail woman to death between hallucinations and amphetamine-induced dementia spells. The film culminates in a nonsensical barrage of sometimes violent, quasi-existential, Shinya Tsukamoto-inspired nightmare sequences that ultimately leave the outcome up to the viewer. An interesting but laboured watch. JW

THE LOST

Chris Silverston - USA

Produced by Lucky McKee and based on a Jack Ketchum novel, this film tells the story of Ray Pye (Marc Semler), a charismatic young man with a tendency for going over the edge. This is a remarkable character study by the man who edited *May* (and directed the student film within the movie, *Jack and Jill*), with tremendous performances, superb editing and a fiercely gritty visual style. It's a straightforward tale that begins with a man who wears crushed beer cans in his boots to make himself look taller and escalates toward a violent finale that will bolt you to your seat. MDB

THE MAID

Kelvin Tong - Singapore

Critics of Kelvin Tong's *The Maid* are quick to point out that many of the scares and concepts in the film are already familiar to even casual fans of the Asian horror wave, and this is true enough. Tong isn't breaking any new ground here but he executes well, thanks to a solid lead performance and some truly impressive cinematography. When orphaned Filipino teen Rosa takes a job as a maid in Singapore to support her young brother, she steps into a world of superstitions and spirits completely foreign to her, and it isn't long before the spirits take notice. It plays the long black hair and water cards but plays them fairly well. TB

NECROMANCER

Piyapan Choopetch - Thailand

When you're a Bangkok cop, pursuing black magic-enhanced criminals you have only one choice: dip into the dark arts yourself. Thailand has an entirely unique system of magic with power and spirits controlled through talismans and tattoos, and when the lead cop sets out to defeat his enemies by harvesting their powers – just think what it would take to remove and keep for yourself someone else's tattoo – things take a decidedly dark and lurid turn. A potent stew of high-energy action and grisly imagery, *Necromancer* seems to stop just shy of living up to its vast potential, but it puts such a fresh spin on the nature and use of magic that it's well worth seeking out. TB

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Graeme Whiffer - USA

What may be the film of the festival features a young corporate ladder-climber and his wife moving into a suburban wasteland. There, they are harassed by a creepy neighbour with an obsession with prisons and self-mutilation. The film is a bleak portrayal of the suburban dream that manages to penetrate the alienation of the American underside in ways that approximate the work of Todd Solondz (*Happiness*) mixed with

Herschell Gordon Lewis and *The Burbs*. A visceral masterpiece of Middle America that's smart and disturbing, with comic moments that don't get any blacker. **MDB**

RE-CYCLE

Dixie Pang Chun and Danny Pang
- Hong Kong

The latest from the Pang Brothers (*The Eye*) has the writer of a ghost story thrust on a journey that takes her into the otherworldly landscapes of her discarded work. Focused on the theme of reincarnation, this one is big and loud, with lots of CGI, and absolutely no imagination. Similar to the labyrinthine structure of *Silent Hill*, but lacking its sense of despair, this overwrought flick never really gets going and is hampered by contrived sentimentality. The Pang Brothers even shoot an aborted fetus cave scene that is ludicrous in both its imagery and content. Avoid. **MDB**

REINCARNATION

Takashi Shimizu - Japan

FanTasia was the festival that introduced *Ring* to the West in 1999, and since then it's safe to say that J-horror has become a little tired. You thought multiple *Ju-On*-making Shimizu had finally slipped out of the creepy-girl-with-hair-in-front-of-her-eyes formula (as with *Mamebito*)? Not here. A group of victims are seeking vengeance for their deaths at the hands of a psycho professor with a knife and an 8mm camera. Except for a few interesting *Peeping Tom*-inspired moments, this second episode of a six-installment series called J-Horror Theatre is stale. **MDB**

SCARED

Paliphum Woejinda - Thailand

Fresh week may very well be an overused setting for horror but Thai flick *Scared* overcomes this cliché by drenching its hordes of pretty young college things with buckets of blood and gore. A bunch of fresh students are stranded in a remote jungle by a bridge collapse and just as they're coming to terms with the graphic carnage of the event, they learn that the jungle is filled with traps – pointy and impaling ones. An all-out bloodbath with no aspirations to be anything else, *Scared* boasts a host of memorable kills and solid production value. **TB**

SNOOP DOGG'S HOOD OF HORROR

Stacy Title - USA

EC Comics in style and presentation, *HoHo's* divided into three morality tales from the Inner City. *Snoop Dogg is the Hound of Hell*, the Crypt Keeper of this anthology, taking us around the 'hood and showing us stories of urban-style justice and retribution. This could have been fun, but it's hampered by tedious scriptwriting and unimaginative direction. The film ultimately lacks the cut-



MEATBALL MACHINE

Yudai Yamaguchi and Jun'ichi Yamamoto
- Japan

Basically the goro version of *Tetsuo*, *Meatball Machine* takes the techno-sexual body-morph horror of Shinya Tsukamoto's famous debut and adds colour, shiny, more fighting, sillier costumes and geysers of splatter. Just as any factory worker Yoji finally comes face-to-face with his dream girl, she's infected with an alien parasite and turned into a Borg-like organic/mechanical weapon. She's programmed to kill and Yoji must become infected himself to save her, along the way uncovering a bizarre extraterrestrial game where humans are used as fighting machines. It's derivative but gory, perverse and over-the-top enough to make for a balls-out wild ride. **DA**

rageousness that covid have made it a good old-style blood-spattered ride, instead, it's a borefest that barely got a cheer from the midnight FanTasia crowd. **MDB**

STRANGE CIRCUS

Sion Sono - Japan

A high point of this year's festivities was undoubtedly the guest appearance of *Suicide Circle* director, Sion Sono, who stopped by to warp the minds of an appreciative FanTasia audience with a screening of his latest nasty, *Strange Circus*. In this hallucinatory and bloody psychodrama, a young girl named Mitsuko is repeatedly abused by her father, who stuffs her into a cello case fitted with a peephole, where she watches him ravage her mother. He then forces them to swap places and it's mother's turn to stand helplessly by while father hideously defiles their little daughter. In order to survive the attacks, Mitsuko creates a schism that allows her to psychologically "become" her mother. It is then revealed to us that these events are possibly nothing more than the fictional accounts of a crippled female novelist who may or may not be writing an autobiographical tale. From this point of uncertainty we're led through a visually overpowering and dizzying narrative that effortlessly moves from linear storytelling into purely abstract, female, weaving in and out of differing temporal planes and conflicting identities. What unfolds is a creatively unflinching, labyrinthine saga that has us constantly questioning what's real and what isn't. As an exploration of the psychological landscape of the abused, Sion Sono's epic mind-fuck has some truly upsetting pitches of intensity. Definitely not recommended for the delicately disposed. **SA**

TOKYO ZOMBIE

Sakichi Seto - Japan

One of the most peculiarly understated zombie films ever made,

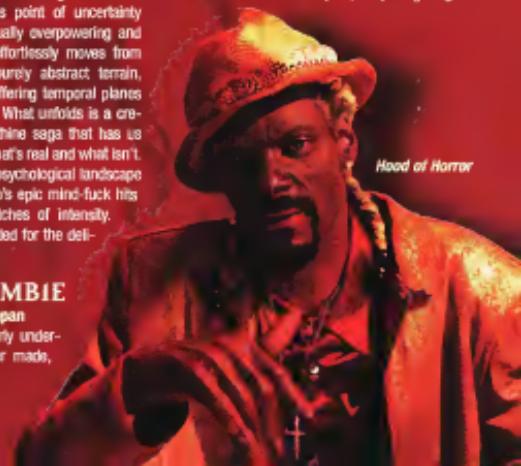
Tokyo Zombie stars Japanese cult icons Tadanobu Asano and Sho Aikawa as a pair of judo-loving slackers fighting for survival when the undead return to life on the slopes of Black Fuji – an enormous mountain of trash in the middle of Tokyo. The survivors of the zombie holocaust eventually settle in a walled compound where the lower classes are employed generating electricity by squeezing hand exercisers and Asano uses his judo skills in human-versus-zombie pit fights for the amusement of the upper classes. The unrelentingly deadpan humour will infuriate as many as it will delight. **TB**

VAMPIRE COP RICKY

Lee Si-Myoung - Korea

Call it a classic case of squandered potential. This story of a dirty cop turned vampire who has to use his feline powers – which come into effect only when he is sexually aroused – to bring down a gang and save the woman he loves desperately wants to be the Korean answer to a Stephen Chow film but it's just not. Once you get past the clever opening sequence that gets Drac's blood to Korea via an infected mosquito, the pacing drags

Hood of Horror





SHORT CUTS

This year, FanTasia screened a whopping fourteen different blocks of short films. But it's their flagship programme, Small Gauge Trauma, which is invariably one of the festival's absolute must-see screenings. The lineup this time was particularly traumatic, having been fiendishly compiled by programmer Mitch Davis to gradually proceed from the reasonably innocuous and light-heartedness of an all-out descent into the darkest depths of unrelenting derangement. Here are a few of the notable pit stops along the SGT road to oblivion:

RICK TREMBLES' DECENSORITIZED

Rick Trembles – Canada

Montreal cult hero Rick Trembles' latest animated short is not exactly a horror film. Then again, the image of a battalion of miniature green soldiers stampeding out of a vagina following a bout of cummingus may very well be horrific to some. To a renowned deviant like Trembles though, it's just foreplay.

WHAT A WONDERFUL DAY

Philip Edelstein – Canada

On a beautiful summer's day, a very cuddly stuffed rabbit innocently wiles away the hours conjuring up some hellacious scenes of random devastation. If Gaspar Noé were to direct an episode of *The Polka Dot Door*, it would probably look something like this.

DAY OF JOHN

Christopher B. Nash – Canada

A cleverly told, tortured tale of redemption and fate. The most amazing thing about Nash's epic, though, is that it's already played at all the major festivals in Canada, which isn't bad considering his narrow-minded film school instructor gave him a miserable O. The second most amazing thing is undoubtedly the thespian stylings of Rue Morgue controller, Marco Pecota, who appears briefly as a goombah hitman. Watch out Pacino!

DUCK CHILDREN

Sam Walker – UK

The standout entry this year and the moment where the programme began to go uncomfortably peer-shaped. This weirdly twisted exercise in malevolent absurdity hits levels of wrongness never before seen on celluloid, proving that Walker (who scored very big last year with his brilliant short, *Tea Break*) is not just a one-hit wonder.

THE OTHER AMERICAN DREAM

Enrique Arreaga – Mexico

Making devastating use of a single angle, presumably from a security camera mounted on the dashboard of a police cruiser, this short depicts the violent rape of a Mexican street hooker at the hands of a vicious cop. The film missed some heated debate amongst some of the Rue Morgue contingent. Is it an angry protest film that allies against police mistreatment of the Mexican underclass? Or is it simply violent exploitation that seeks to justify itself by quoting a bunch of statistics at the end about missing persons? You decide!

Stuart Andrews



SUBJECT TWO

Philip Chidell – USA

At the top of a snowy mountain range, Dr. Franklin Vick (played by young Jack Nicholson doppelganger Dean Stapleton) has been conducting highly unethical research in the field of, well, resurrection. After his first subject fails him he calls upon troubled, migraine-plagued med student Adam Smith (Christian Oliver) to assist in furthering his "practical" studies, which involve killing and reviving Adam over and over and over again. A modern Frankenstein tale, Philip Chidell's second feature is a suspenseful thriller that's far from the Gothic grandeur of Mary Shelley's novel or the stylized monster-driven theatrics of James Whale's *Universal* classic. Rather, it's a character-driven slow burn punctuated by sudden acts of violence that builds up, like so much icy snow, to a moving twist ending. JV

horribly, the martial arts are weak and – worst of all – it's just not funny. TB

WILDERNESS

Michael J. Bassett – UK

In Michael J. Bassett's follow-up to his 2002 trench horror *Deathwatch*, a gang of nasty bullies is plucked from a juvenile detention centre and shipped to a deserted island to teach them a lesson for pushing one of their fellow inmates to suicide. Much more punishment is dished out than expected, however, when an ex-military nutjob shows up to brutally avenge the victim's death. Unfortunately, the only real punishment dished out here was to the FanTasia audience, who had to sit through 110 minutes of this unimaginative and tedious mishmash of *Lord of the Flies*, *Battle Royale* and *SCUM*, the agony of which was only partially alleviated by the occa-

sional moment of mild gore. If this is any indication of what we can expect from the emerging New Wave of British Horror, then I'm turning in my surfboard. SA

ZOMBIE SELF DEFENSE FORCE

Naoyuki Tomonatsu – Japan

Calling the latest from the crew behind the Japanese cult hit *Shady* a low-budget job is more than a little generous. This story of a zombie onslaught brought on by a downed UFO was seemingly shot on a low-grade Handycam and the weaknesses are front and centre, but what money they did have went into a handful of gleefully trashy gore sequences – the zombie fetus being a personal favourite. With its lo-fi charms, it's more *Trome* than *Romero*. For serious zombie fans only. TB



Wilder ness

*All Lilith ever wanted...
belonged to someone else*

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and disturbing tale of
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BELGIAN DIRECTOR FABRICE DU WELZ DISCUSSES HIS PERVERSE AND PUNISHING CINEMATIC LOVE POEM *CALVAIRE*, JUST PRIOR TO ITS LONG-AWAITED NORTH AMERICAN DVD DEBUT.

The Tenderness of

BARBARISM

by Mitch Davis



*I*t's been over two years since a young Belgian filmmaker violated hearts and minds at the Cannes Film Festival when he unveiled his now-legendary feature debut, *Calvaire* (a.k.a. *The Ordeal*), in that event's prestigious Critic's Week section. A violent, cruel-hearted descent into (anti-) social madness, shotgun-shelled with jet-black wit, a surrealistic sense of the poetic and perverse manipulations of religious iconography, *Calvaire* tells the punishing tale of cover singer Marc Stevens (played by Laurent Lucas, no stranger to fans of off-kilter Euro arthouse works from stints in such films as *In My Skin*, and *With a Friend*

Like Harry), an unreadable man who makes his living crooning love songs to rooms full of post-menopausal women in small, forgotten towns.

On the morning after a gig, Stevens drives off through a fog-shrouded stretch of road that seems to flow onwards to the very ends of the earth. He has clearly taken a wrong turn... somewhere. This is made even more evident when the lonely singer finds himself stranded in a savage all-male community of animal-raping miscreants – not to mention being tortured and held captive by a man who mistakes him for a cherished long-lost wife!

Shot on location in the Belgian countryside over a period of six weeks on a budget of 1.2 million Euros, *Calvaire* marks the feature filmmaking arrival of writer/director Fabrice Du Welz, a radical new talent whose love of cinema is palpable in every aspect of his work. Aside from the many surprising nods in the writing, the mere fact that Du Welz made a point of casting staple Jean Rollin (RM465), actress Brigitte Lahaye and notorious screen heavy Philippe Nahon – a virtual figurehead of France's confrontational new wave after his turns in such films as Alexandre Aja's *Hauts Tensions* (RM457) and most significantly Gaspar Noé's *Carné* and *I Stand Alone* – speaks volumes. Further, *Calvaire* was shot by Benoît Deléze, noted cinematographer on Noé's *Irreversible*, as well as the brilliant first feature from frequent Noé collaborator Lucie Hanzeljilovic, *Innocence*.

Yet even the most observant film lovers will stop taking notice of *Calvaire*'s referential charms as their sensibilities get lacerated by the film's many unforgettable set pieces, which span the psych-out spectrum from a well-intentioned crucifixion to a jaw-dropping literalizing of *Deliverance*'s

"squeal like a pig" sequence. To put it mildly, when *Calvaire* was unleashed at Cannes, it turned heads. Violently.

Not long afterwards, Palm Pictures bought the film and vowed to bruise cerebellums across North America by giving *Calvaire* the release many felt it could never have in this part of the world (due more to its extraordinarily bizarre tone than its graphic violence). Now primed for an October DVD release, the full, unaltered *Calvaire* will emerge into a surprisingly different horror culture than the one that existed only two years ago, before James Wan's *Saw* (and later productions like *Hostel* and *Wolf Creek*, RM452) launched the continuing ultra-violent "survivalist" horror wave. It now finds itself a part of a popular horror subgenre that could never have been anticipated while it was being shot, where the film's frequently uncomfortable moments of horror are now almost commercial.

Du Welz speaks to Rue Morgue from his home in Brussels about his darkly comic, art-horror hand grenade.

The film opens with Marc Stevens as an object of lust in an exclusively female (and post-menopausal) population before flipping him to the other side of the same extreme as a "female" object of lust in an exclusively male population. This can be read in many ways, and I'm curious to know how you look at it.

Calvaire is an experimentation. I've always envisioned to do cinema using strong, restrictive and difficult concepts – not to make myself interesting, but because it permits me to be creative. *Calvaire* is my first film; I wanted to experiment with lots of things, the mirror effect, identification, mental and physical frontiers, etc. Two worlds: one feminine, the other masculine, but one and only solitude. In the two worlds depicted, men and women are in a quest for the same thing – love at all costs, in any kind of way, but love. Here I struggled to depict a world without women that blinds itself more and more violently and always in search of focal points and love. In that respect, *Calvaire* is primarily a movie about love, of a deviant kind, but one of love nonetheless.

One thing that strikes me is that the only character in the film that never behaves in a kushful or even sexual manner is Marc, the singer of love songs and the object of desire for literally every other character in the film, except for perhaps the barnyard animals!

Marc Stevens is a two-dimensional character, some sort of asexual Tintin. A representation, an icon, a projection like a crucifix on a wall. Someone, something that lets us believe and hope. He looks like a human, but is he really one? It's difficult to get attached to him, and by that I wanted to replace the character's identification. If we identify with Marc, it makes no sense. So by moving the sympathy towards Bartel [Jackie Bernoyer] or the villagers, it then becomes interesting. We are brought to give them meanings, which is very disturbing for

some spectators. What makes *Calvaire* a singular horror movie is its limit and strength. A French journalist once told me that for him, *Calvaire* is sort of a prequel to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. He was imagining that at the end of the film, when Marc regains some sort of ill "humanity", he could well become Leatherface. I'm thinking here of a phrase by Hunter S. Thompson: "The man who transforms into a beast delivers himself from the suffering of being a man."

Is the sociopathic all-male community depicted in the film intended to be a satire of the extremes of patriarchal cultures? Would the men still be raping animals (and each other) if there were women in the town? Further, would the men be raping women if any were around, or is their violent and depraved state a direct result of the absence of femininity in their lives?

I believe that a community of men and women needs to believe in something, anything, and that it's this faith, this belief that generates barbarity, genocides, intolerances and passions. *Calvaire* is modestly an absurd reflection of this idea. For me, believing that a man is the son of God, making war, is as absurd as to think that Marc is Glona, the cheating wife of Bartel.

*Would you agree with the statement that *Calvaire* is a sexually politicized horror film?*

No, I don't think so. *Calvaire* is a dark poem, a movie without inhibitions, in which I put all my love for the genre. *Calvaire* is a physical experience rather than an intellectual one. It's a playground for creation. Personally, I like my convictions to be shaken, it gives me the impression to go forward, it's very invigorating. I really hate pieces that purr and ramble like a lot of the American hor-

for cinema of today, calibrated, puerile, to eat in, *Calvaire* is a free experimentation, a movie that shows you its ass. You can see whatever you want in it.

*A performing artist is typically driven by a personality fuelled in equal parts with the need for personal expression and the need to be watched and appreciated by others. In *Calvaire*, you chose to have both your lead characters see themselves as performing artists. How do you see this informing their circumstances and actions?*

Once again, Marc is the indicator, he reveals Bartel's insanity. If Stevens had been a bread baker, it's probable that Bartel would have become a bread baker, too. All the characters that live and evolve around Marc live through him, like we live a lot through our own expectations, convictions and lusts.

Calvaire is full of clever visual and spoken references to other films and artists, from Paul Bartel, and the '30s Universal horror actors to Deliverance, Carnival of Souls and The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, yet the film never falls into emulation or blatant homage. Is there anything you'd like to discuss about influences in film culture and life?

Calvaire is extremely referential, it's evident. I'm passionate about cinema; I see a lot of films and some of them have strongly affected me and inevitably infiltrated themselves in my directing. The theatre of cruelty is another important reference in my eyes. Like a lot of surrealists poets, I try to profoundly reach the public, I try to exhaust, unnerve, fascinate, disgust and provoke it. I'm searching for a reaction, a strong one, as strong as possible, a reaction that will last long after the end of the screening. There is a phrase of [filmmaker Henri-Georges] Clouzot that I really like to repeat and that applies to me: "Cinema must be an aggression and a spectacle." I want my cinema to fit that description. But regardless of all these references, *Calvaire* follows a very personal development – romantic and sentimental since the story is a big quest for love.

What is it that compels you in this kind of a narrative?

Freedom. Genre cinema permits a lot of freedom. That's why I love fantasy films and westerns, because they are films without borders. And there is nothing in my eyes more exciting than to pass over borders.

Were there any sequences that you had to tone down due to actors' comfort levels with the material?

No, I did everything to protect the actors from the difficult conditions of the shoot, but we went to the end of what we could do and I didn't tone down anything.



Philippe Nahon

"Calvaire is primarily a movie about love, of a deviant kind, but one of love nonetheless."

Fabrice Du Welz

Calvaire is a film that provokes extreme responses in its viewers. What was the most memorable audience response that you either witnessed or were informed of?

I had a lot of reactions. Some think the movie is a pretentious joke, others think that the film is very amusing, others still think that *Calvaire* will age well and will have a long life. The reactions are very different, but that's very good, I never tried to gain unanimity.

I'm sure you're tired of answering this one, but please, tell us about the inspiration for the hellish barroom dance sequence.

The bar scene was not written, it was in the air, but it was a night when I came home that I watched a movie by André Delvaux entitled *Un soir, un train* [One Night... A Train] when I got the idea. The point was to really not make the villagers speak; I wanted to reach a poetic state of sensationalistic nature that gives more to see than to understand. The dance scene is the community's expression of despair and solitude in search of focal points and love.

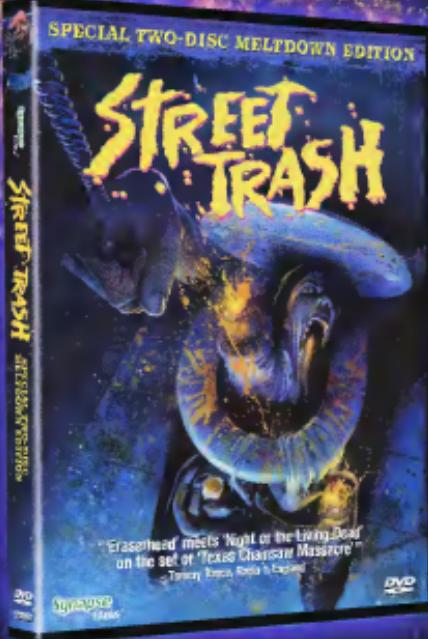
Let's close with the ultimate interview cliché – what are your future plans, Fabrice?

The project is called *Wrayan*, which means "ghosts" or "lost souls" in Thai. I hope to shoot it in the spring. The story revolves around an English couple in Thailand mourning the death of their son, which brings them deep into the jungle in the search for a child the wife thinks she

saw on an old, used videotape. From this realistic starting point, based on events following the Thai tsunami, we plunge into the couple's deterioration, of these two persons more strongly dividing, becoming more and more vulnerable, leading them to gradually become ghosts. *Wrayan* will be a ghost film that begins very realistically, develops into a fantasy thriller and ends in true horror fashion. Here, I take the reverse path from *Calvaire*; I'm searching for empathy with this couple, then bringing [the story] to a mirror of itself, one of a society that is incapable of looking in its face, to accept the death of their own. Substantially, the film is a confrontation of these two worlds, oriental and occidental, especially in the perceptions that we have about death in our world, where it's a real taboo, whereas it's fully part of life in the oriental world.



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MANY A SPOOKY STORY BEGAN WHILE HUDDLED
AROUND A SIMPLE LETTERED BOARD WITH
A TEAR-SHAPED DIAL.

DIALLING A HISTORY OF

To communicate with the dead is to open a Pandora's box of morbid curiosity: an opportunity to find out what happens when we die, or one last chance to speak with a loved one on the other side – assuming you believe in such things. Spiritualism, the belief that the human personality survives death and can communicate with the living through a sensitive medium, has been practiced for centuries. The methods used to open this hotline to the netherworld are many and varied, from séances to tarot readings, the I-Ching to measly 1-900 numbers. Each method has enjoyed periods of popularity, but the most enduring is the ouija board.

The origin of the living's attempts to contact the dead in all likelihood dates back prior to recorded history, but the modern spiritualism movement saw its birth in 1848 when Kate and Margaret Fox captured the world's imagination by publicly claiming to have communicated with the spirit of a murdered peddler through a variation of a séance. The sisters' notoriety opened the floodgates for numerous mediums worldwide to step forward and let the world know that they too mastered the ability to 'speak' with the spirit world. The fact that the Fox sisters eventually admitted that they perpetuated a hoax mattered little; the public was captivated and séances became a popular form of interactive entertainment despite the fact that mediums were phony.

During the initial spiritualism boom, mediums devised a variety of ways to communicate, and one of the most common was with the use of a planchette (a French word meaning "little plank"). The method employed a pencil attached to a small, triangular wooden object; the spirit would guide the medium's hands and move the planchette to spell out communication. This crude technique wasn't very practical, as the results were generally illegible. It's not

known who came up with the idea to scrap the pencil and have the planchette glide itself over an alphanumeric table (originally these were homemade devices), but, according to the 1861 book *Le Livre des Médiums*, at least two versions of such planchette boards were being sold.

Mass production came in 1890, with Charles Kennard's Kennard Novelty Company. Apparently it wasn't enough to keep the business afloat, though, and Kennard lost his company, which was taken over by his former co-worker William Fuld in 1892. Fuld brought the marketing know-how to make the device sell, renaming the board "Ouija" (pronounced "wee-juh"). The claim that the moniker was Egyptian for "good luck" wasn't true, but since the board allegedly named itself during a sitting, the title stuck.

According to the website museumoftalkingboards.com, "one of William Fuld's first public relations gimmicks, as master of his new company, was to reinvent the history of the Ouija board. He said that he himself had invented the board and that the name Ouija was a fusion of the French word 'oui' for yes, and the German 'ja' for yes."

Mass production began again in 1901 and the novelty was successful. Fuld continued to manufacture the Ouija board for 25 years until accidentally falling off his factory roof to his death in 1927.

The success of Ouija launched numerous imitators and rip-offs – patents be damned – all of



Design by Kennard Novelty Company, 1890.

WHAT IS IT? WHERE DID IT COME FROM,
THIS FAMOUS CONDUIT TO THE DEAD?

NO



THE DEAD THE OUIJA BOARD

BY ANTHONY PERTICARO

which were launched by toy and novelty companies and have no lineage to spiritualism groups. The earliest appears to be 1898's *Wireless Messenger*, put out by the W.M. W. Wheeler Company. Southern Toy Company's *Orkide* would follow it in 1905, but the funkiest rip-off was released in 1919 by the Theodore H. White Co., called the *I-O-O PSY-CHO-I-O-E-O-GRAF*, which was designed as if it was predicting the LSD haze of the 1960s.

Despite Ful's accomplishment in making the board profitable enough to result in a slew of imitators, it still hadn't ascended into the public consciousness. It would take a wave of death to carry the board into the limelight. As Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle – an avowed believer in spiritualism who lectured throughout the world – pointed out in *The History of Spiritualism, Vol. II* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1926), it was the horrors of World War I that stoked a public fascination with the spirit world.

"While it is true that Spiritualism counted its believers in millions before the war, there is no doubt that the subject was not understood by

the world at large and hardly recognized as

having an existence," Doyle wrote. The war changed all that. The deaths occurring in almost every family in the land brought a sudden and concentrated interest in the life after death. People not only asked the question, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" but they eagerly sought to know if communication was possible with the dear ones they had lost."

Ouija board sales soon spiked like never before and became a take-home do-it-yourself medium kit. People were hooked on the legitimacy of the board, perhaps blinded by their longing to reconnect with lost relatives.

More Ouija imitators went into production during this time, with such monikers as *The Mysterious Planchette*, *Mystic Tray*, *Hasko Mystic Board*, *Magic Marvel*, and even the *Olympic ESP Board*, which came with a record to play ESP music (1). Other rip-offs of the period settled for rhyming names such as *Kogee and Swam*, and when they ran out of Far East rhymes they settled for *Asyah*. But the greatest gall came from the American Novelty Company when they actually lifted the Ouija name with *Ouija Queen*.

Of course, writers were quick to capitalize on the roiling public's fascination with the ouija as a legitimate means for communicating with



The Mysterious Planchette by The Planchette Co.

the dead. In 1918, a St. Louis housewife named Pearl Curran claimed to have channeled a spirit named "Patience Worth" who "wrote" six novels. Curran later admitted that she made up Worth and it was the sole reason for the success of the novels. People didn't believe her and still credited the spirit of Worth as the true author. Another author claimed to have been struggling until he asked the ouija what would make him a successful writer. The board allegedly spelled out "C-H-I-N-A-M-A-N." While that seems pretty vague, the writer, Sax Rohmer, ran with it and created the *Fu-Manchu* series in 1913.

Ouija boards remained in production for decades, but following this boom sales



Historical Talking Boards (top to bottom) The Oracle board by William Fuld (1930); Electric Mystery Oracle by William Fuld (design on metal 1930s); Round by Clinton Art Products; Black Magic by Griff Craft (1940s); and a vintage Oracle board by Parker Brothers (1940s).

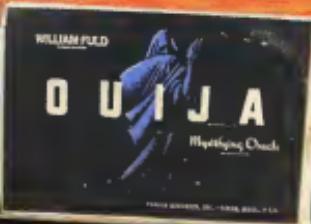
SD-RUE MORGUE

declined. After the World Wars, sales kept falling until they hit an all-time low in the early '60s. Then, in 1966, Parker Brothers acquired the exclusive rights to the board and started mass-producing them on a lark. In a shocker, within a year's time, the Ouija Board was outselling Monopoly, with sales that exceeded two million units. If anyone knew the trick to selling a parlour game, it was Parker Brothers.

Founded in 1883, the Parker Brothers Company (owned by brothers George, Charles and Edward) saw its first major success with the card game *Rook*. In 1935, the company saw its greatest achievement with the release of *Monopoly* — the highest selling board game in history — and would continue to enjoy major successes such as *Cue*, *Risk* and *Sorry*. The Ouija Board's success remains an anomaly in Parker Brothers history, though, an antiquated "game" with no rules, no strategy, no winner or loser, no beginning or end. (A fresh batch of Ouija wannabes also appeared at this time, with names like *Mystic*, *Mystic Devil Board* and *Zirya*.)

Some might point to the Vietnam War as a catalyst for the ouija board's renewed popularity but the public had grown more sophisticated since the World Wars. Rather, it was that Parker Brothers recognized that this CB radio to the afterlife was designed like a board game, so it could be marketed like one. The box artwork of the time is particularly hilarious, featuring 1960s/70s hip youngsters sitting around the board, laughing, smiling and joking in a fun-for-the-whole-family kind of way. They even released a glow-in-the-dark version. Thus, the ouija board was reinvented from a conduit to the dead to a fun diversion.

In addition, there was also a rise in the popularity of the supernatural. Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster and UFOs were on the pop culture radar more than ever during that period, as were psychics — most notably Jean Dixon, who became an international celebrity after her prediction of John F. Kennedy's death. There was also a spike in horror films featuring the board, notably its brief but chilling appearance in *The Exorcist*. Amazingly, after the release of *The Exorcist* in 1973, tales of demonic possession via ouija became commonplace (as defined by friend-of-a-friend-style urban legend tales). Plus, religious fundamentalists added to its supernatural



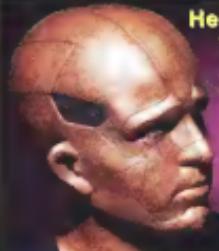
aura by condemning it as a dangerous tool for opening realms that *Man was not meant to know*.

Probably the goofiest tale of ouija-inspired mayhem would be a California prison riot that occurred in August 2000 when inmates playing with a homemade ouija (actually, a modified Scrabble board) at the Santa Clara jail freaked themselves out and believed the devil had taken over the prison. A priest ended up being called in to exorcise the penitentiary.

Ouija boards continue to sell, not so much out of a renewed interest in talking to the dead (spiritualism and divination remained popular, but 800 lines, a more modernized version of fortune telling, replaced the ouija), but because there has been such a long-standing tradition of the board's presence in toy stores. Demand has remained steady enough that it has stayed in production, despite the fact that spiritualism has become so accepted that a TV program like *Crossing Over* hardly raises an eyebrow.

In the end, ouija boards will likely never go away. Although there are free-to-use online boards (such as the one at museumoftalkingboards.com), the classic version — basically unchanged for over 100 years — remains on store shelves nationwide, retailing for between \$10 and \$20 (even Dark Horse released a *Hellboy*-themed "Talking Board" last year in both regular and deluxe editions). And, whether or not one truly believes in spiritualism, the ouija board offers a hands-on thrill that makes it a timeless tool for supernatural entertainment. ☀





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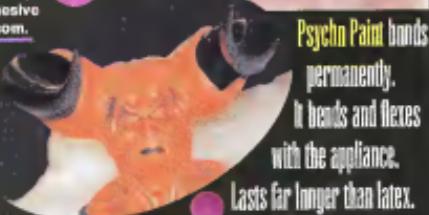
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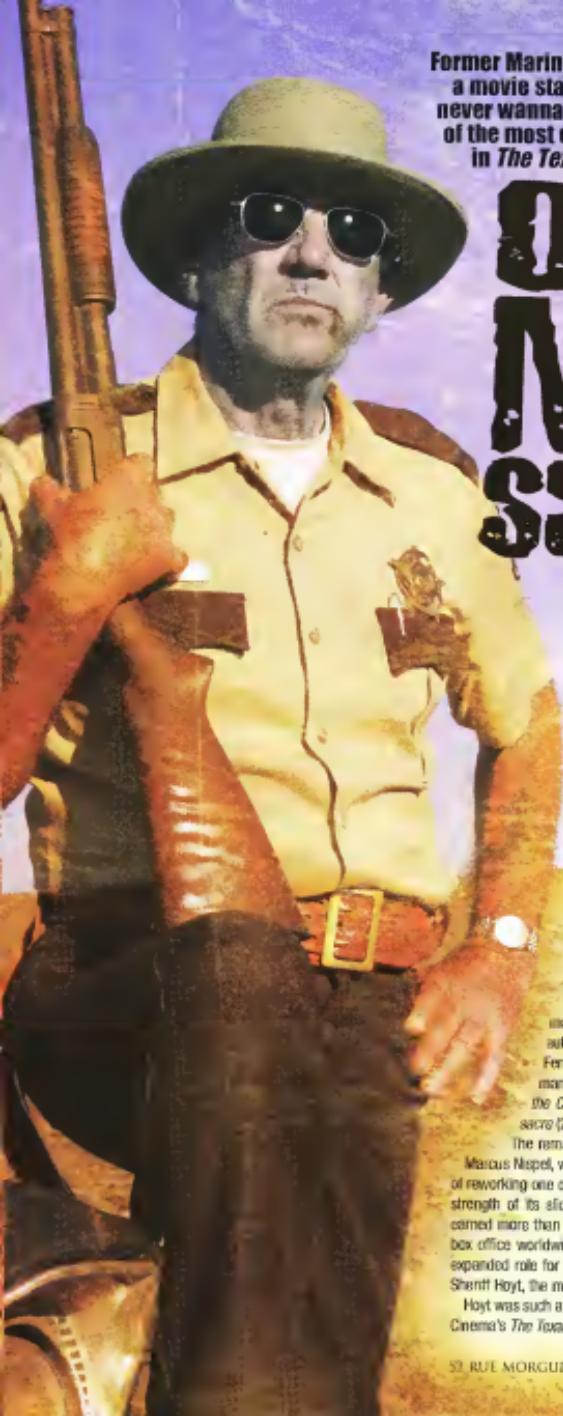
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Former Marine Corps drill instructor **R. LEE ERMEY** became a movie star playing some of the meanest guys you'd never wanna mess with. This month he reprises the role of the most evil character of his career — Sheriff Hoyt — in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning*.

ONE NASTY SUMBITCH

BY DAVE ALEXANDER

Even if you don't know his name, you'll instantly recognize the fire in those steely eyes and the pitch of that sharp-tongued sneer. He doesn't talk, he growls, he doesn't stare, he looks right through you; and when someone messes with his hair-trigger disposition, you can bet there'll be hell to pay — with interest. At least that's how most folks know 62-year-old character actor R. Lee Ermey.

After more than a decade in the United States Marine Corps, which included tours of Vietnam and Okinawa, two years as a drill sergeant, the awarding of several medals and early retirement due to injury, Ermey enrolled at the University of Manila to study acting and criminology. In 1979, he served as technical advisor on, and had a small role in, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. His big break, of course, came in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, where he was so effective as a technical advisor to the actor playing powder keg drill instructor Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, he stole the role and was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for it.

In the two decades since, Ermey's gone on to a variety of roles in dramas, comedies, kids' films and horror movies, almost always as an authority figure, usually a military man. His genre entries include *Abel Ferrara's Bodysnatchers*, *The Fight Club* (where he peddled the Hartman character), *Se7en*, the *Willard* remake, TV appearances in *Tales From the Crypt* and *The X-Files*, and, most notably, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003).

The remake of Tobe Hooper's 1974 horror standard, by music video director Marcus Nispel, was a surprise hit among horror fans, who initially regarded the notion of reworking one of the pillars of the genre with skepticism — to put it lightly. Yet on the strength of its slick uprightness, uncompromisingly gory story and shocking brutality, it earned more than ten times its production budget, raking in over \$100,000,000 at the box office worldwide. A sequel — or in this case prequel — was inevitable, as was an expanded role for Ermey, who tore a strip out of the first movie as the downright evil Sheriff Hoyt, the meanest member of his kidnapping, torturing, killing cannibal family.

Hoyt was such a popular villain, in fact, that his role was greatly expanded in New Line Cinema's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (in theaters October 4th), which

is essentially the origin story for Leatherface and clan, revolving around a group of kids unlucky enough to encounter the South's most ruthless lawman. Stepping once again into Hoyt's dusty, sun-baked skin-tickers, Ermy says Rue Morgue is bound off on a film he promises will bring new levels of viciousness, perversion and depravity to his horrifying alter ego.

Talk to me about Sheriff Hoyt.

I know, Sheriff Hoyt is kinda my creation. He really didn't have a lot to do with The Texas Chainsaw Massacre remake [originally]. By the time I got through with him, he was a pretty lovable, cuddly character. Writers in Hollywood are one thing, and actors are another thing, and if an actor's worth his salt, he brings a lot to the set. Sheriff Hoyt's a fun guy to play – he's a sexually perverted homicidal maniac. They tell me I'm natural. My perverted sense of humour pulls the [character] together. One of the reasons we decided to make Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning is the simple fact that Hoyt was such a hit with everybody, they wanted to have more of him. If you watch Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning, you'll see that [he] pretty much controls the entire show and he's one of those fantastic characters you just love to hate. He's such a scumbag – my kinda guy.

What's going on in the prequel?

Basically, what we do is show how all this got started, and what happened here and why, what happened to Uncle Monty's legs, how Sheriff Hoyt got his teeth knocked out. There are questions that are answered.

What's your favourite scene in the film?

There's a young man that we kinda take custody of, he's up – well, we capture the bastard and we lock him up, but he gets beaten a little bit by Sheriff Hoyt. Hoyt's trying to educate the young man and knock a little sense into his perverted coconut, and it takes a few minutes; it's a nice, long scene.

Do you consider yourself a horror fan?

Of course. I mean, I grew up with that kind of stuff. Back when I was a kid we had some great horror films. I grew up in the '50s and Alfred Hitchcock was big time back in those days.

Had you seen any of the TCM films before being cast in the remake?

Oh, absolutely. I'd seen 'em all. And I thought the very first one, Tobe Hooper's rendition, was a masterpiece.

What do you think is so effective about the original TCM?

It's just the way the story is told, the photography – it's a true horror movie, it scares the hell out of you. When you hear that chainsaw crank

"SHERIFF HOYT'S A FUN GUY TO PLAY – HE'S A SEXUALLY PERVERTED HOMICIDAL MANIAC." R. LEE ERMY

up, it makes the hair on the back of your neck stand up. That's a gruesome thought – it's like the thought of being eaten by a shark. That's a horrible thought, that's why I never look up surfing.

Getting back to the remake, just how much of the Sheriff Hoyt that we see was in the script, and how much of the character was your creation?

Take the scene where I come out to the van and the dead girl's in the van, and we go through the hole in the back window and we zoom in through her head, I get into the van with Saran Wrap and I'm wrapping the young lady up, the body – there was not one word written for that. I sat in that van sweating my ass off because it was August in south Texas for Christ sake's, and there was no air conditioning. I was in that van for five minutes, wrapping that body up in Saran Wrap, and there was not one word said. It's kinda boring stuff, wouldn't you say?

Yup.

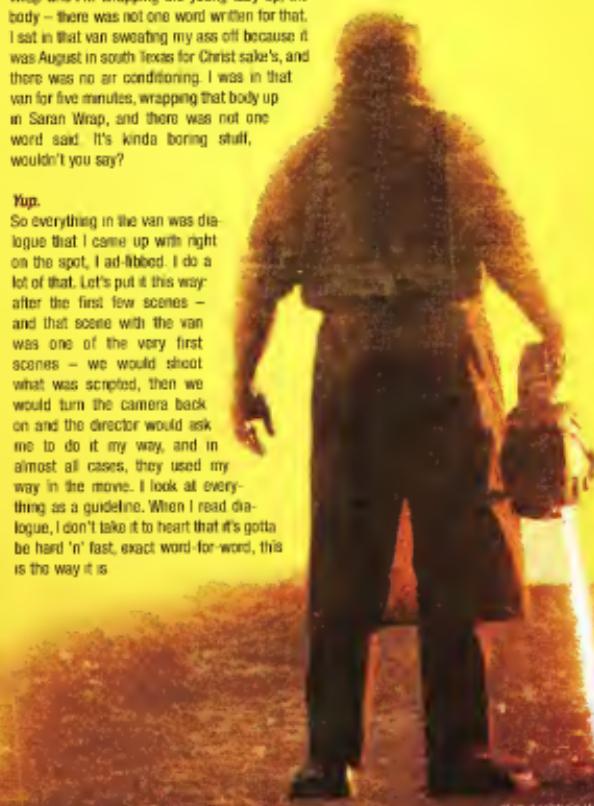
So everything in the van was dialogue that I came up with right on the spot, I ad-libbed. I do a lot of that. Let's put it this way: after the first few scenes – and that scene with the van was one of the very first scenes – we would shoot what was scripted, then we would turn the camera back on and the director would ask me to do it my way, and in almost all cases, they used my way in the movie. I look at everything as a guideline. When I read dialogue, I don't take it to heart that it's gotta be hard 'n' fast, exact word-for-word, this is the way it is.

Did you audition for the Sheriff Hoyt role, or were you hand-picked for it?

Well, I had worked with New Line previously on *Willard*, the rat movie, and I did a lot of ad-libbing on that show, and they liked me so much that night in the middle of [filming] that show, New Line shot up an offer asking if I would consider being in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

Did you ever think a career yelling at people in the military would lead to a career yelling at people in the movies?

I play good guys too! I've even played a couple of love interests. I seem to hurl insults quite





BEEN THERE, SAW THAT

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE (1974) ULTIMATE EDITION

Starring Marilyn Burns, Paul Partain and Gunnar Hansen
Directed by Tobe Hooper
Written by Kim Henkes and Tobe Hooper
Dark Sky

If you're reading Rue Morgue and you actually need a plot synopsis for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, you need to put down the magazine and go watch the film IMMEDIATELY. Then watch it again. If, at that point, you still can't quote at least ten lines of dialogue, watch it again. As for the rest you – which must be most, if not all, of you – here's the deadeye on Dark Sky's new *Ultimate Edition*.

The "new high definition transfer from the 16mm camera originals" looks good, but not significantly better than the last reissue. There's only so much tweaking you can do with low-end film stock, so some of the night scenes are still pretty murky, although if you've only ever seen the film on VHS, this reissue will undoubtedly be a revelation. You're also welcome to agonize over the choice of Dolby 5.1, 2.0 Surround or remastered original mono soundtracks. The commentary from Tobe Hooper, Gunnar Hansen and cinematographer Daniel Pearl is from the original laser disc, as are the deleted scenes and outtakes, but there's also a new commentary from actors Marilyn Burns, Paul Partain, Allen Dizoner and art director Robert Burns, concluding with an apparently unexpected phone call from Ed (Hitchhiker) Neel, during a break from signing autographs at a horror con.

The Shocking Truth, the brand-new documentary on disc two, is less than shocking but undeniably exhaustive. If you're a fan, you probably won't hear any stories you haven't heard before, but they're being told by a wider variety of cast and crew, several of whom have since died. Flesh Wounds, a secondary featurette, could be subtitled 7 Short Films About *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, as it's a fun series of random reminiscences from sundry cast and crew. Gunnar Hansen's tour of the TCM house-cum-restaurant – which, like *Halloween's* Myers House, has been moved to a new location – is entertaining and charming, if (again) old news for hardcore fans. All told, this one's pretty sweet as reissues go, and certainly an improvement on the last version. Let's just hope this pivotal classic doesn't go the way of *Dawn of the Dead*, a milked-to-death cash cow reissued every other year with a few more whistles and bells.

John W. Bowen



TCM. *The Beginning*: Leatherface comes calling, and
(Below) Sheriff Hoyt in his element.

nicely, so I guess it's something I picked up as a drill instructor. I was a drill instructor in '65, '66 and '67. You know, drill instructors have to be a bit aggressive, and back in those days there was a bit of name-calling and some intimidation involved. You don't take a Marine

Angel off his motorcycle and bring him in for marine training and expect him to roll over.

What's key to affecting a menacing personality?

I'd say to do the very unusual and unexpected is very effective. It's like the scene in Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* with the hitchhiker [cutting his hand]; that's not a huge violent thing, like a chainsaw, but it's totally unexpected and totally unprompted. A little thing like that builds [frightening] characters. A little blood doesn't hurt, but intimidation – you just must be able to master the art of intimidation. That's what you're trying to do. When you're doing something such as the [hand-cutting scene] you're intimidating the audience. And you should be – try to intimidate the doshgit out of every swingin' dick sittin' in the theatre.

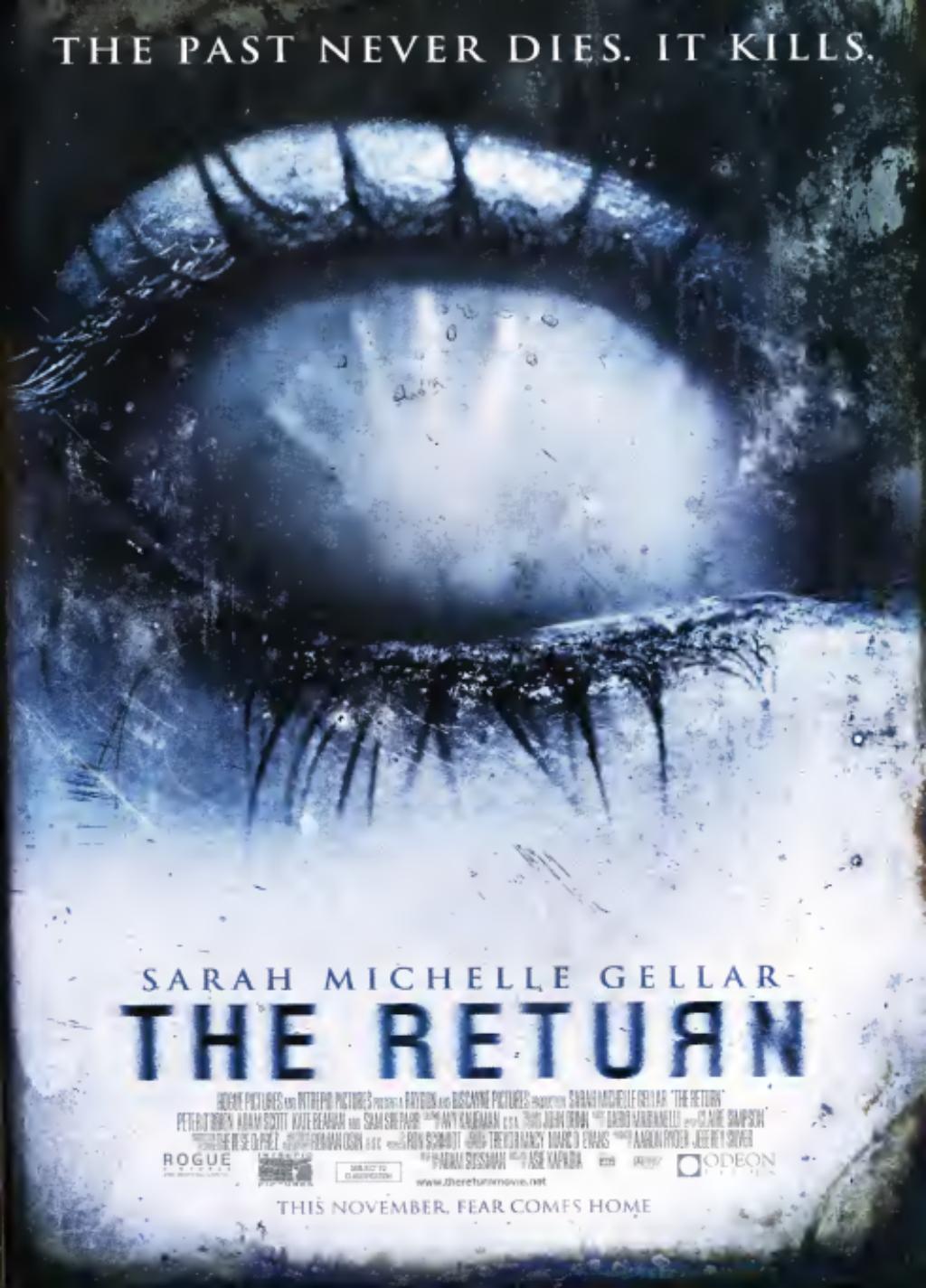
If you walked into the Rue Morgue offices and saw me slouched in my chair, feet up on the desk, chewing on a jelly donut, what choice words would you have for me?

What is your major malfunction, Alexander?! Didn't they teach you well as a child, you unorganized rat bastard piece of civilian poo? Drop down and gimme 25, and then get after that goddamn story! WE GOT A FUCKIN' DEADLINE HERE, YA KNOW! Ooo-aaah!

Sir, yes sir! ☺



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1. Guest of honour Alice Cooper and Rue Morgue president Rodriguez Bustillo. 2. RM Radio's Chris Alexander and Jeffrey Combs. 3. RM Radio's Stuart 'Feedstock' Andrew gets lucky with Karen Black. 4. RM's editor-in-chief Jovanka Vuckovic and Last Rites Tattoo Theatre's Paul Booth. 5. RM's film reviser James King, photographer Ashlea Wessel, and RM's Marco Peccati. 6. Assistant editor/webmistress Monica S. Kuebler with Michael (Queen Feed) Riven, Gemma (Kissig Cameo) Flies and Don (Northern Lights) Hutchison. 7. RM's managing editor Dave Alexander and Rodey Piper. 8. Mike Myrols and RM's art director Gary Pulin. 9. The Creepshow rock band at the Festival of Fear's Voodoo Death Party.



10. RUE assistant director David Donoff, Michael Berryman and Karen Black. 11. Ben 'The Reel Gifman' Chapman and RUE's graphic designer Brett Rucker. 12. RUE's advertising manager Jody Infurnari parties with writers Sean Plummer and Paul Dano. 13. Linda Blair. 14. Linda Blair with Joliet Lorraine from Bloody the Vampire Slayer. 15. Chris Alexander conducts the midnight costume contest at the Voodoo Death Party.

16. Monika S. Kuebler with horror author Jack Ketchum. 17. RUE filmmakers Brett (My Dead Girlfriend) Kelly, Rusty (Alice) Heals and Lee (Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter) Demarbre show the masses how to make a horror movie. 18. Last Chance Lance with Walter 'Dr. Satan' Phelan. 21. RUE alumni John W. Bowen, Sean Plummer, Gary Butler and the Gore-Met.

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LEGENDARY HAMMER SUPERVIXEN INGRID PITTS LOOKS BACK ON HER VAMPY CAREER IN HORROR AND DISHES ON HER UPCOMING GENRE PROJECTS.

The Lovely Lady Vampire

by TOM MURRAY

She's arguably the sexiest vampire in film history and she's old enough to be your grandmother. Born Ingrida Petrov in Poland in 1937, Ingrid Pitt got her start on stage in Berlin before making the transition to the silver screen with blink-and-you'll-miss-it roles in *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), Orson Welles' *Chimes at Midnight* (1965) and Peter Duffell's *The House That Dripped Blood* (1970). But it's as vampiress number one in Hammer Studio films such as *The Vampire Lovers* (1970) and, most notably, *Countess Dracula* (1971) that she left her mark as the woman most likely to make you want to be undead.

"It's nice to know people still remember me from the Hammer days," 68-year-old Pitt tells *Rue Morgue*.

Remember? More like fantasize. As such, it's only justice that her shining moment is finally given the attention it deserves with a lovingly packaged special edition DVD from Fremantle Home Entertainment (collectors take note, it's a PAL disc). The upcoming special re-release of *Countess Dracula* will arrive complete with stand-up packaging, a commentary track, an interview with Pitt and a new feature on Hammer's 50th anniversary.

"The great thing about *Countess Dracula* was its sense of scope," she recalls fondly, "something which Hammer managed to bring, I think, to all of its later films. There never seemed to be any fuss or panic. Although you heard the odd complaint about the time schedules, it was a rare event when a Hammer film ran over sched-

ule — or budget for that matter."

Countess Dracula, a stylish and somewhat florid remake of the Countess Bathory story was to many the apex of her career and as such she still has fond memories of the five-week shoot.

"[That was] an age when films were allowed to let the story grow," says Pitt. "[There was] none of the wham, bam, thank you ma'am of modern horror cinema. It is truly said that Hammer nurtured the people who worked for the company — nothing sentimental in that. The company directors saw it as making good commercial sense. For me it was also a happy time and I've never regretted getting involved in the horror scene."

And in the horror scene she remains. Recently, Pitt had a part in the upcoming film *Sea of Dust* (from first-time director Scott Bunt) alongside Tom Savini, who plays the legendary Prestor John — the mythological Christian king. In the film, which is by all accounts a stylistic homage to Hammer and also Italian director Mario Bava, Pitt stars as Anna, a wise woman who tries to save the family she works for, but without much success.

"I do get to do a lovely gruesome murder along the way," she reveals about her character. "[But] ultimately, *Sea of Dust* is a film about



ideas, about the destructive nature of blind adherence to any ideology: political, religious, or otherwise. And its basis in truth goes to show that not much has changed since the *Crusades*."

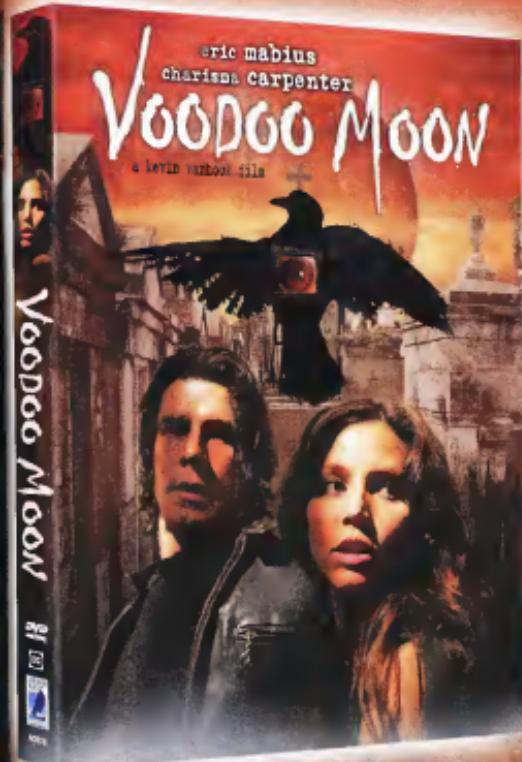
In addition to acting, Pitt has also had success as a writer. Her latest was *The Ingrid Pitt Book of Murder, Torture and Depravity* (2000, Batsford), and she was recently commissioned by the relaunched Hammer Stud-

dios to write *The Hammer Xperience*, a tome that ranges beyond the story of the horror films, chronicling everything in the Hammer catalogue from 1933 to present.

"In *The Hammer Xperience* I try to get across the little side plays that rarely get mentioned," she explains. "It also takes a look at some of the stalwarts of the company who made Hammer what it became, people like wardrobe mistress Molly Arbutnot, editor James Needs, composer James Bernard and producer Tony Hinds, as well as actors such as Michael Ripper, Ralph Bates, Andrew Keir and the 'must haves' Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee."

The book is currently in the hands of Hammer executives and, should they approve, will see publication by Christmas 2007. For more on Pitt, visit her at pittinhorror.com.

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IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT.

by LIISA LADOUCEUR

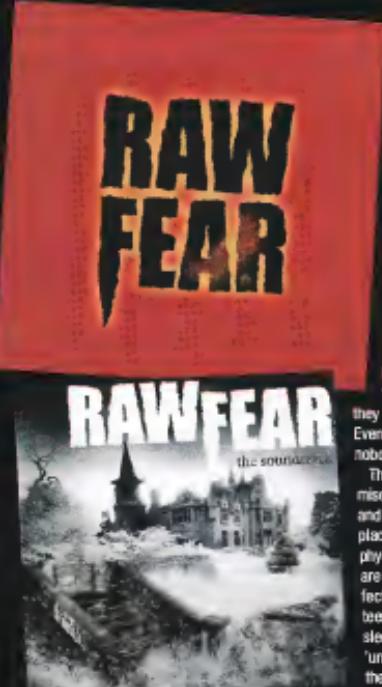
Your friends are over. You've gathered in the sitting room. You turn out the lights. And then...whispers in the dark. Floorboards creak while a chainsaw roars. A girl screams. And screams. Typical Saturday night of fight flicks, yes? Not quite.

From the UK comes *Raw Fear*, a new party game that gives you the tools to turn your next gathering into a homemade night of terror. Now, there's something intrinsically combat about board games, especially horror-themed ones. Still, the *Raw Fear* campaign makes a lot of big promises: "Halloween in a box", "the ultimate horror experience", etc. "Must be played in the dark," it threatens. Anyone who has played *Nightmare*, that interactive video/board game, or *Vampire Hunter*, the cheesy glow-in-the-dark kids game, should be suspicious of such claims. But *Raw Fear* succeeds where other gothicky games don't, mostly because its main ingredient is super creepy: your own imagination.

Inside the little red *Raw Fear* box are two audio discs (one music soundtrack and one sound effects) and a booklet of scary stories. The basic idea is to read the stories aloud accompanied by the music, preferably in a dark atmospheric setting. Cue feelings of doom. Then, create your own pranks.

Created by James Adams, Leigh Warner and KK, three musicians and self-described fans of horror films and horror film soundtracks, the project started as a spooky effects CD for a weekend castle getaway.

"Our objective was to create something that was genuinely scary and would stimulate people's imagination," explains Adams. "Forget headless horsemen, cackling witches, and boring ghost stories, we wanted to select tales that really put hairs on the back of your neck – the kind of horror that you can imagine happening to you."



The tales are ripped from urban legends, and if some seem overly familiar (The Cellar is essentially another version of When a Stranger Calls, for example), it's because Hollywood has already mined this territory for many a teen slasher. Still, the selection is varied, scary and a few of the stories do deliver genuine goosebumps. As for the music, it has a noticeably dark ambient/gothic vibe, with minimal piano or synth-driven melodies and disembodied or

demonic voices and vocals lurking in unexpected places. Together, they provide a good foundation – depending on the talents of the storyteller and the creepiness of the surrounding – that just may be enough to create the promised horror experience. Or, to increase the fear factor, the game designers suggest secretly adding the sound FX CD.

"One night we were camping in the woods, sitting 'round the fire telling the ghost/horror stories and I put on the sound effects CD on a portable player hidden behind a tree," explains Adams. "[When] the sound effects started up, they absolutely terrified the entire group. Even after we told everyone it was a joke, nobody could relax... or go to sleep!"

The FX CD comes with more ideas for its mischievous use. A few more extras – maps and info on the world's most haunted places, ghost-hunting tips, eerie photography from Simon Marsden (RMM42), etc. – are superfluous but may impress the perfect target audience for *Raw Fear*: teenagers. The game is tailor-made for sleepovers, where impressionable young 'uns with a taste for horror can really scare the bejesus out of their pals with these urban legends, or by following the enclosed instructions for the party game *Murder in the Dark*. (Adults who like to play with blindfolds may enjoy that part, too.)

Raw Fear is no full-on *Halloween*-level box of horror, but its combination of stories, music and creative game playing ideas makes it a fine alternative to another night at the movies. Worth stocking up on before the next blackout.

For more info or to purchase the box set (\$49.99US) visit rawfear.net.

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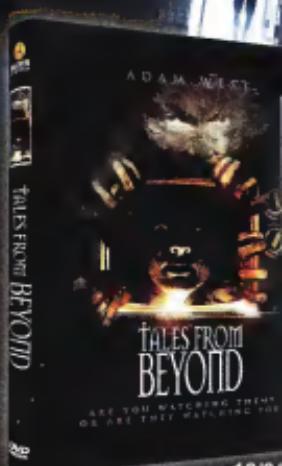
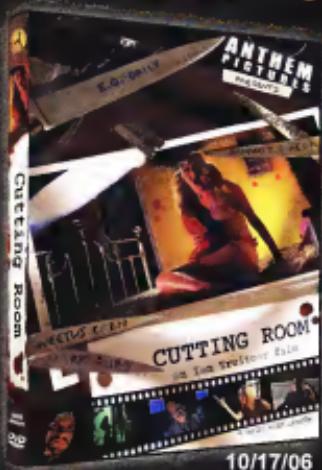
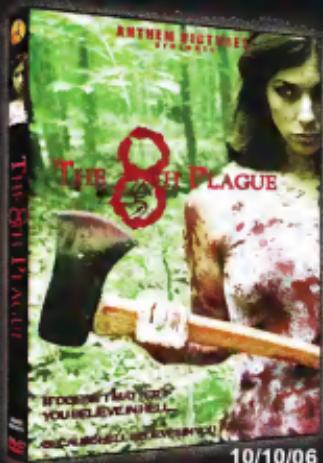
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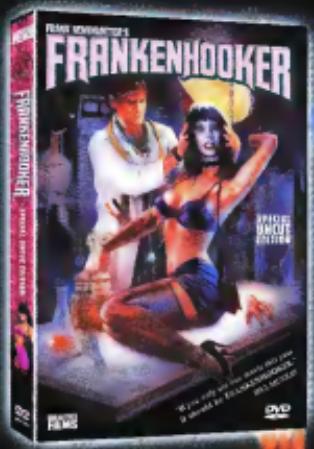
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IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY...

THE WOODS

Starring Agnes Bruckner, Patricia Clarkson

and Bruce Campbell

Directed by Lucky McKee

Written by David Ross

MGM/United Artists

Like the rest of the Rue Crew (and probably most *RM* readers), I was soundly knocked on my ass a few years back by a gorgeous, frightening, funny, heartbreaking and refreshingly original film by Lucky McKee called *May* (2002). It wasn't just a great horror film, it actually changed the way I looked at horror films, something that had only happened a few times before. So what of McKee's follow-up feature *The Woods*, mired in post-production hell for the better part of two years? Well, it's miles away from *May*, and it's many more miles away from *Sick Gurt*, his blackly hilarious *Masters of Horror* episode. In fact, it's his most conventional work so far, and I don't mean that in a bad way 'cause "conventional" for McKee ain't strictly the missionary position.

Talented newcomer Agnes Bruckner plays Heather, a troubled teen whose parents pack her off to the Falbun Academy, the scariest boarding school since the one in *Suspiria*. Things are obviously very wrong with the place right off the bat, from the creepy-ass staff to the hallucinations Heather experiences on her first night. Her suspicions about the surrounding woods being alive escalate when students begin to disappear.

The always-watchable Patricia Clarkson is a chorus of unspoken threats as the school's passive-aggressive headmistress, and Bruce Campbell as Heather's spineless dad proves conclusively that he can pull off a completely straight-faced role (though it's doubtful he has permanently sworn off ham and cheese). David Ross' sharp script plays to McKee's strengths, and while setting the film in 1965 initially seemed odd, it does contribute nicely to its slightly alien feel. Lesley Gore's pop hit *You Don't Own Me* is a startlingly effective leitmotif, as well.

I didn't have high hopes for *The Woods*,



Weird Weeds: Kathleen Mackey attacked by roots in Lucky McKee's long-awaited second feature

given its lengthy and troubled production history, rumours persist that *The Woods* was originally called *The Woods*, then retitled because McKee's film was slated for release first – and that was two summers ago. But here I sit, heaving a sigh of relief. Welcome back, Lucky, and in the name of all that's unholy, don't stay away so long next time.

John W. Boweau

ANOTHER FLATLINING REMAKE

PULSE

Starring Kristen Bell, Ian Somerhalder

and Christina Milian

Directed by Jim Sargent

Written by Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Wes Craven

and Ray Wright

Dimension Films

To many a J-horror fan, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's 2001 film *Kairo* (a.k.a. *Pulse*,

RMHSJ), was the holy grail of the genre. Following Hideo Nakata's *Ring*, the movie replaced a haunted videotape with the internet as a vehicle allowing malevolent spirits to enter the world of the living. With its slow pace, miasmic atmosphere and grimy look, *Kairo* showed modern urban life and its growing reliance on technology as leading society toward an utterly lonely and dead existence. Of course, its overly complex story and bizarre vibe are the very things that would make any J-horror detractor stay away, but whether you're a fan or not, it shouldn't effect your opinion of this silly, utterly frightening American remake.

Co-written by Wes Craven, the principal story remains mostly true to the original. Technologically dependent teens become alarmed when they begin receiving computer text messages from one of their peers after he's killed himself. Soon, a rash of mysterious suicides breaks out, caused by a virus in



Pulse: Possibly the worst Hollywood J-horror remake to date.

the form of white CGI beasties that are sent through computers and cellphone signals. In a moment of unintentional humour, the protagonists outrun the ghouls in a truck by reaching a "dead zone" where there's no cellphone reception.

Very little of the movie makes sense, but then, neither did the original. The difference is that where *Kairo*'s unique mood sustained a feeling of impending dread which heightened the viewer's fear, *Pulse* has the look and feel of a music video or TV commercial loaded with good-looking teens, quick edits, and pitifully ineffective jump scares. Somehow, that just doesn't have the same effect. Since director Jim Sosner is best known for music videos from the likes of Mariah Carey, it's no surprise either.

Admittedly, anybody would have a difficult time trying to translate such a distinctive film as *Kairo* for North American audiences. But in trying to combine the central theme of the original with all the complexity and intensity you would expect from a PG-13 teen horror movie, *Pulse* is as bland and brainless as it gets and stands as yet another total failure of a remake.

Aaron Von Lupton

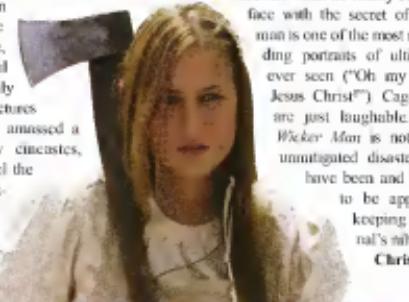
BACK TO SUMMERSIDE

THE WICKER MAN

Starring Nicolas Cage, Ellen Burstyn and Molly Parker
Written and Directed by Neil LaBute
Warner Bros.

Director Robin Hardy and writer Anthony Shaffer's 1973 occult masterpiece *The Wicker Man* is an untouchable piece of work. Equal parts detective thriller, erotic melodrama, black comedy and tragic morality tale, and boasting a soundtrack filled with traditional Scottish folk music, the film remains, more than

30 years later, one of the most unique, bizarre, beautiful and thoroughly upsetting genre pictures ever made. It has amassed a cult of highbrow curmuggles, many of whom feel the prospect of remaking their beloved pagan shocker is akin to editing Britt Ekland's nude dancing



in the original for television.

And yet here it be folks, *The Wicker Man* 2006, American-style (and PG-13). Now, remaking *The Wicker Man* for a different time and cultural sensibility isn't a completely horrible idea. The story of a dedicated, pious police officer pitting his faith against an island full of clandestine pagan lunatics has as much, if not more relevance in today's al-Qaida-scarred society than it did in '73.

Thankfully, unlike the recent *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* remake, director Neil LaBute's update plays with the story enough that the material feels fresh. Replacing Edward Woodward's gallant and prudish Sergeant Howie is tortured pathologist Edward Malus, played by Nicolas Cage in his "scared bassett hound" mode. Malus gets a pleading letter from his fiancée telling him that her daughter has gone missing on the Island of Summerside. He immediately ventures alone to the remote community to investigate and lay to rest the memories of a little girl he saw die months earlier. Instead, Malus finds conspiracy, an ancient society of murderous heathens, and eventually, the wicker man itself.

Incredibly atmospheric and grim, LaBute's redesign of Schaffer's elegant screenplay isn't bad at all. In fact, some of the casting is inspired (*The Exorcist*'s Ellen Burstyn replacing Christopher Lee as the Mayor of Summerside, for example). But it's not a hair on the original and where it truly denials is in the casting of Cage. In Hardy's film, Woodward's

reaction when he finally comes face to face with the secret of the wicker man is one of the most nerve-shredding portraits of ultimate terror ever seen ("Oh my Christ! Oh Jesus Christ!"). Cage's attempts are just laughable. Still, *The Wicker Man* is not nearly the unmitigated disaster it should

have been and is definitely to be applauded for keeping the original's nihilism intact.

Chris Alexander

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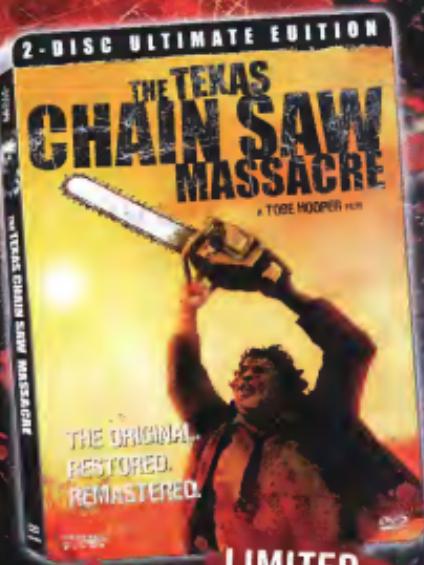
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Snakes On A Plane: Samuel L. Jackson neck-deep in the spirit of drive-in creature flicks.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

SNAKES ON A PLANE

Starring Samuel L. Jackson, Julianne Margulies and Nellian Phillips
Directed by David R. Ellis
Written by John Heffernan, David DeSandro and Sebastian Gutierrez
New Line Cinema

Concept has finally conquered storyline, and most of us couldn't be happier than a cobra in a cockpit. The viral internet punchline of the year, *Snakes on a Plane* could easily have ended up a hopeless victim of its own online hype, but instead it captures a spirit of fun and frenzy so sorely missing from today's multiplexes. Rather than wasting time throwing knowing winks at its audience, it allows viewers to revel in its inherent silliness, even as it slips in some halfway decent thrills.

The plot set-up is handled as a chore to be endured until the inevitable scenes of tasering, torching and squashing. Samuel L. Jackson, playing FBI agent Neville Flynn, is assigned to protect a flavourless murder witness (Nellian Phillips) on the red eye from Hawaii to Los Angeles. To stop him from testifying, mobster Eddie Kim (Byron Lawson) smuggles a crate containing hundreds of motherfucking snakes onto the motherfucking plane.

The film's numerous plot inconsistencies, absurd physics, murky lighting and barely passable CGI are easily laughed off once the pheromone-charged snakes bust out of the cargo hold. Slithering out of toilets, oxygen-

mask compartments and barf' bags, they attack a plane full of one-dimensional stock characters that dutifully expose necks, eyeballs, nipples and crotches to accommodate a pair of venomous fangs. Even with the badly matched additional footage shot to bump the film to an R rating, it's never particularly scary or bloody, but director David R. Ellis (*Final Destination 2*) keeps the gurnicky premise tightly coiled until the predictable finale, offering a steady flow of vis-

ceral thrills that peaks when a giant boa swallows an arrogant British businessman – whole.

Sure, the film is aware of both itself and the audience, lightly satirizing the action genre and frequently going to crowd-pleasing lengths of ickiness, but what's really refreshing about *Snakes on a Plane* is that it doesn't try to disguise its overt triteness with slick computer graphics, a blaring hip-hop soundtrack or even geeky in-jokes. This is simply an honest creature feature that never aspires for more than the breezy drive-in tradition of 1970s classics like *Grizzly* or *Ford of the Gods*. Best experienced with a loud – and preferably obnoxious – crowd.

Paul Corupe

THE NIGHT EVERYONE CAME HOME

HALLOWEEN: 25 YEARS OF TERROR

Directed by Stefan Hutchinson
Written by Stefan Hutchinson and Anthony Mast
Anchor Bay Entertainment

In the off-chance there hasn't already been enough said about *Halloween*, here come another 300-odd words specifically regarding Anchor Bay's new leave-no-pumpkin-unturned two-disc documentary set, including a full-length feature narrated by PJ Soles, the Horror Channel's tour of the original film's locations, hours (literally) of interviews and footage from the 2005 fan



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JAPAN'S MOST DEVILISH SCHOOLGIRL

TOME: BEGINNING

Starring Rio Matsumoto, Kenji Mizuhashi

and Asami Imajuku

Written and directed by Ataru Okawa

Media Blasters

Forget about Freddy vs. Jason vs. Michael Myers vs. Pinhead, or whatever ill-conceived gore gangbang you think you want to see. What the monster mash-up fanboys should be petitioning Hollywood for is any combination of the above undead icons and indestructible succubus Tomie (RMM40).

The insanely beautiful Rio Matsumoto plays our favourite kit-wearing danger doll in this, the sixth *Tomie* film. For the virgins among you, Tomie, conceived by manga master Junji Ito (*Uzumaki*), is a schoolgirl whose beauty causes men to worship and then kill her. But like a demonic cross between Carrie and Carpenter's *The Thing*, Tomie keeps coming back, resurrected again and again, despite complete dismemberment/destruction.

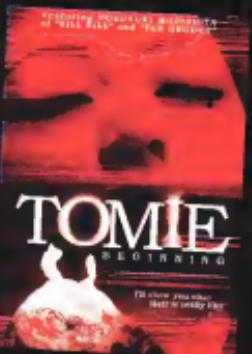
In this "origin" installment, former schoolmates Reiko (Asami Imajuku) and Yamamoto (Kenji Mizuhashi) meet at their abandoned high school to discuss Tomie, the transfer student whose beauty entrances the boys and makes all the girls jealous — except Reiko, Tomie's only friend. When a trio of costumed attackers attempts to kill Tomie but only severs her ear (which promptly scuttles off into the underbrush), it's Reiko who bandages and comforts her... until she sees her friend's ear regenerated and a second Tomie born from the bandage's blood. But like all *Tomie* films, the ultimate victim eventually prompts her own murder and resurrection.

The *Tomie* in this installment (helmed by original *Tomie* director Okawa) is both more sympathetic and insane than ever before. Matsumoto's take on the character is a blasphemous contradiction to traditional Japanese ideas of teamwork and the subordination of personal desire to the group good. She's a loner, an individual with no limit to her libido, and no fear. Her inevitable destruction comes at the hands of the entire class in a surreal group autopsy, a bizarre scene which acts to re-establish the supremacy of the group against the individual — that is until Tomie saunters back into class the next morning and drives half of her classmates insane.

On the minus side, there's too much exposition in the film, and Reiko's attempts to explain her friend/friend's regenerative powers scientifically (apparently she's the equivalent of an evil, evolved flatworm) undercut the religious descriptions of her erstwhile friend as both an angel and devil. Which is it?

Still, with its canny sense of adolescent angst and willingness to spill schoolgirl blood, *Tomie: Beginning* likely won't prove the cinematic end of Japan's most devilish school girl.

Sean Plummer



convention in Pasadena, California and more. And if you thought John Carpenter's calling card had been sufficiently covered in Mark Cerny's excellent documentary *Halloween Unmasked* (1999), well, think again.

At this point, a disclaimer is in order: for all that I adore Carpenter's classic as much as the next homophile, I can't bring myself to give a flying f*** about any of the sequels beyond *Halloween II*, which was a bit of a lame duck itself. Nothing says "jump the shark" quite like introducing Druids into the mix in the fourth film — have these people learned nothing from *Spinal Tap*? Nonetheless, should your own interests, ahhh, extend to that sort of thing, you'll get plenty erect over extended (read: interminable) interview footage and panel discussions with the stars, directors and writers of said sequels.

Speaking of which, this set comes up short in one respect: the almost complete absence of Jamie Lee Curtis and Carpenter. The meager interview footage on hand is lifted from earlier documentary material, which is a shame since, unlike Donald Pleasence, neither can use mortality as an excuse. On that note, some sort of tribute to the late great Debra Hill — producer and co-writer of the original (as well as Carpenter's one-time main squeeze), who died of cancer last year — would have been nice too.

I'm not faulting the filmmakers entirely for the above omissions, some of which were obviously beyond their control, and if the fat count ultimately seems a bit high, it's all in the name of appeasing the completists (you know who you are). Any film that fundamentally changed the game is *Halloween* this is well worth exhaustive documentation, and hence also well worth your hard-earned dough.

John W. Bowes

HOOK, LINE AND STINKER

I'LL ALWAYS KNOW WHAT

YOU DID LAST SUMMER

Starring Brooke Nevin, David Paetkau

and Torrey DeVitto

Directed by Sylvain White

Written by Michael D. Weiss

Sony Pictures

In the long list of horror movies that didn't warrant a sequel, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* easily makes it to the Top 10. With this direct-to-video release, the *Last Summer* franchise has hit trilogy territory, and that's just two too many.

After a 4th of July prank — involving the legend of the psycho angler from the previous outings — turns deadly, the pranksters

繼續 continued on page 72

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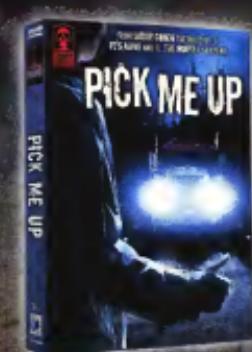
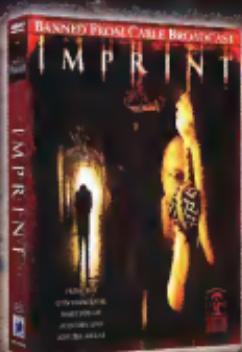
HORROR

HORROR ESSENTIALS HITLIST

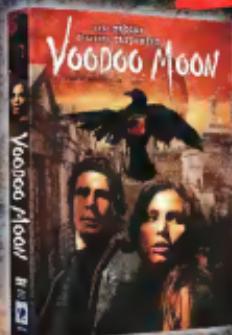
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- CHILDREN OF THE CORN
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- HALLOWEEN 5 SPECIAL EDITION
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- THE HILLS HAVE EYES
- THE TOOTH FAIRY
- THE WICKER MAN
- Voodoo Moon



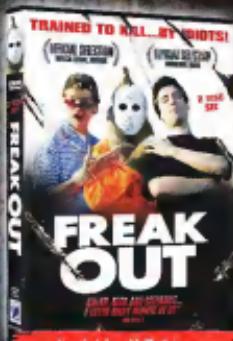
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The Last Summer Franchise: Stalk teens, kill teens, repeat...

responsible make a pact that their secret will die with them. As the one-year anniversary of their ill-fated hijinks nears, someone decides to make their clandestine accord a reality. Now all they can do is find out who knows and stop them before they all end up plaque-insetted on the wall singing Take Me To The River, Billy Bass-style [Now that we'd like to see - Ed.].

Writer Michael Weiss' inept dialogue and lame storyline make one long for the days of series creator Kevin Williamson. Not only does Weiss forgo the revenge aspect of the first two films, he adds a painfully obvious supernatural twist and, in the greatest "what the fuck?" setting blunder since Jason visited the Big Apple, the slicker-clad, hook-logging fisherman pops up in... rural Colorado! To add directing insult to screenwriting injury, Sylvain White's visuals are little more than a mélange of frenetic MTV camera movements and flash edits. Although, with a cast that reads like a who's who of second-tier teeny bopper TV thespians - resumes with guest shots on *Charmed*, *The Crow: Stairway to Heaven*,

Smallville and *Crossing Jordan* - at least no one can accuse the filmmakers of not knowing their target audience.

It's nearly impossible to name a horror franchise that doesn't have its own bastard offspring to contend with - that's a given. The problem with the *I Know What You Did* series is that it started off weak and could only get worse, which it has. Scrape this off your viewing list like a barnacle from a boat.

Ken Bonnie

A DULL, THROBBING ACHE

THE TOOTH FAIRY

Starring Carrie Fleming, Nicole Muñoz and Lochlyn Munro
Directed by Chuck Bowman
Written by Stephen J. Cannell, Cookie Rae Brown, Corey Strode, et al
Anchor Bay Entertainment

Just when you thought every mythical figure of childhood fun had been co-opted for a straight-to-video/DVD horror flick, The Tooth Fairy joins Santa, snowmen,

clowns, dolls and puppets in an attempt to wring a few scares from our tender memories of pre-adult innocence. Unfortunately, it's a concept explored with all the passion and conviction you'd expect of someone who's, well, making a horror film about a tooth fairy.

The story begins in 1949, when a boy answers an ad offering a new Schwinn bike in exchange for his last baby tooth. On the outskirts of town, he meets up with the ad writer, a disfigured hag who hacks him to death. Why the townies know so much about her medical history but can't figure out that she's behind the disappearances of dozens of local children is left to the viewer's imagination.

Cut to the present, where a doctor-turned-writer is putting the finishing touches on his new country inn,

which just happens to be on the site of those long-ago child murders. He's joined by his estranged girlfriend and her twelve-year-old daughter Pamela (who befriends a ghost girl), as well as the inn's fire houseguest, an ex-stripper whose tight T-shirt identifies her as the unlucky star of the film's obligatory T&A scene. Strange things start to happen; people die mysteriously in admittedly gruesome and inventive ways, including a slow kill via wood chipper; then The Tooth Fairy runs out of secondary characters to butcher and sets her sights on the fractured family.

The scenes of Pamela and her ghostly friend have a strange, fairy tale-like power but are ham-handedly edited into a film that looks like an extended episode of *Melrose Place* with minor villain from *Buffy* or *Angel* running amok behind the scenes. There is not a single surprise to be had here, unless you've never seen a horror film made after 1977. And in case you're won-

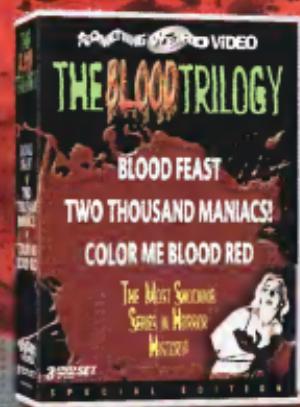
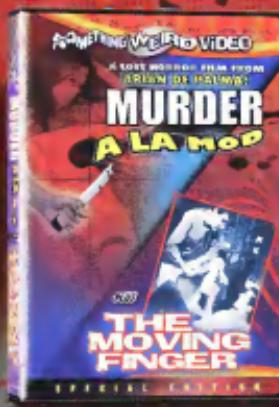
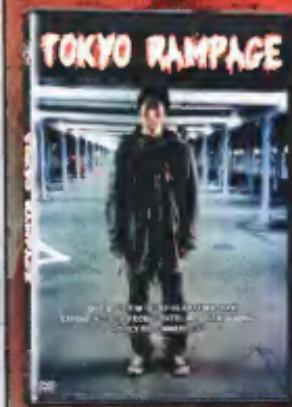
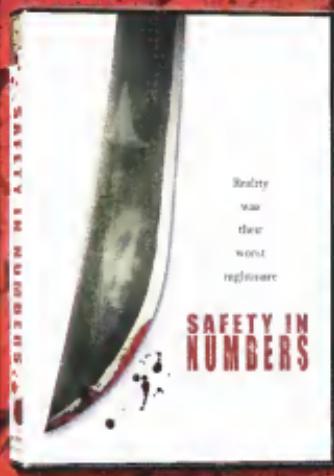


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The Tooth Fairy: Plays out like an extended episode of *Melrose Place* with a minor villain from *Buffy* running amok behind the scenes

dering, placing the DVD under your pillow will not score you a refund in the morning.

James Grainger

FRENCH CUISINE

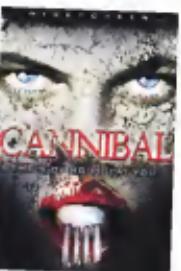
CANNIBAL

Starring Marc Paquet, Frédéric Pierre and Marianne Farley
Directed by Daniel Roby
Written by Joel Chappelleter and Daniel Roby
Lionsgate

Clearly reaching for art house rather than grandhouse, the icy French Cannibal horror-thriller *Cannibal* picked up the Best First Feature Film award from the Toronto

International Film Festival in 2004 under its original title, *La Peau Blanche* ("White Skin"). Directed by first-timer Daniel Roby, this is a flawed but beautifully shot tragic love story that deserves better from the marketing zombies at Lionsgate who have tried their best to make it look like a blood-drenched romp.

Though occasionally dark and unsettling, *Cannibal* never really gets under your skin the way it intends to. In the film, university student Thierry (Marc Paquet) is captivated



by a girl he meets at school, a wispy redhead named Claire (Marianne Farley). They enjoy a brief but intense series of trysts, but Claire remains emotionally distant. Thierry's roommate Henri (Frédéric Pierre) knows something's not quite right about the girl, especially when he spies her slurping out the inside of a used condom. Confronted over her lack of commitment by Thierry, Claire reluctantly reveals that she has cancer — but is it the truth? Henri is convinced that she's really a demonic succubus, greedily feeding off of his friend's life energy.

Despite invoking a predatory sexuality that hearkens back to Cronenberg's early works, too many of *Cannibal*'s themes and subplots are hinted at and then abandoned like exhausted cadavers. Thierry's suffering school work, Claire's mysteriously abandoned apartment and the roommates' hot-and-cold friendship all remain curiously unresolved, as do the film's repeated allusions to racial prejudice. Why bring up Claire's dislike of African-Canadian Henri or Thierry's initial disgust over the "pale skin" of redheads, if you don't plan to do anything with it? This exploration of racism is all but forgotten by the second half of the film, except for the dubious revelation that succubus prefer to feed on black men because they are the "most human" of all races.

Already available in Canada on DVD as *White Skin*, this is one that doesn't need to be repackaged as a slasher, since it's really a stylish effort that works best when it delves into the subtleties of the character relationships, rather than by-the-numbers horror. Fans of offbeat fright flicks may find something here to nibble on, but anyone who goes into *Cannibal* with expectations of females feasting on chunks of flesh is bound to come away from the table less than satisfied.

Paul Corupe

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Zombiegeddon: A film not even Uwe Boll could love

JUVENILE, EVEN FOR TROMA

ZOMBIEGEDDON

Starring Joe Estevez, Brinke Stevens and Tom Savini

Written and directed by Chris Watson
Troma Entertainment

"Don't watch zat movie. Don't lookit zat movie at all. It's not worth it to pay von dollar to rent it. *Zombiegeddon* is a piece of zhit. I stay away from zat movie as far as I can. Zank you." — Uwe Boll

Yes, you read that right. Uwe Boll, the director who'd be the 21st century's answer to Ed Wood if his movies were one-tenth as

much fun, recorded an intro to *Zombiegeddon*, warning the viewing public that this is a shitty movie. And loath as I am to admit it, he's onto something. *Zombiegeddon* is amateurish, juvenile, full of jokes that fall flat, and is frequently plagued with an appalling sound mix.

Its sole appeal is the veritable smorgasbord of familiar faces it serves up for B-movie geeks, so if you include yourself in that numba, here are some reasons to watch it: Brinke Stevens as a radio show host, William Smith as the Devil, Joe Estevez as his smarmy minion, Ed Neal (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre's* Hitchhiker) as a priest, Lloyd Kaufman as a horny janitor,



Linnea Quigley as a guidance counsellor (I'd have finished high school for that), Feleessa Rose (*Sleepaway Camp*) as a hot chick, Tom Savini as Jesus and a real tiger as a tiger. Apparently Ron Jeremy, Tina Krause and Julie Strain are lurking about somewhere too, but I'm fuckin' bollocked if I can spot them. It's a kick-ass cast in search of a movie. Let us pray they find one some day.

The plot, as it is: Satan sends a plague of zombies to take over the world and only two very, very dirty Tru-movie cops — who buckle like certain Tarantino characters we could all name — seem able to do something about it, providing they can take time out from blowing away innocent citizens.

There's lotsa H.G. Lewis-style lo-fi gore, a few boobies and one pretty cool (read: perverse) reference to Abel Ferrara's *Bad Lieutenant*, a movie that so deserves to be referenced more often by directors who reference those kinds of things. But make no mistake, *Zombiegeddon* is still pretty bad. Even the closing credits explicitly say so. At least those creeps at Troma are honest.

John W. Bowen

BREAKIN' BONES AN' BUSTIN' RULES

DEATH TRANCE

Starring Tak Sakaguchi, Takemasa

Suga and Kentaro Seagal

Directed by Yûji Shimomura

Written by Junya Kato, Shinichi Fujita,

Seiji Chiba and Yûji Shimomura

Tokyo Shock

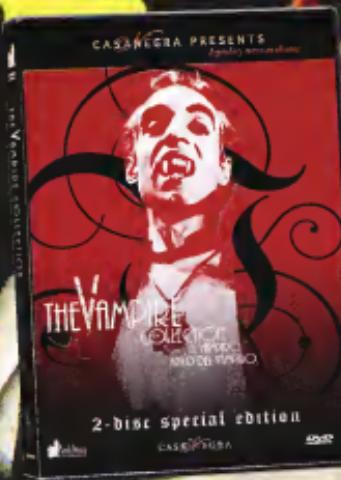
Fans of Ryûhei Kitamura's crazy gangster/zombie flick *Versus* should have little trouble digesting this fight-heavy offering from his action director cohort Yûji Shimomura. The inexplicably titled *Death Trance* stars charismatic *Versus* lead Tak Sakaguchi as Grave, a restless young samurai who, against all odds, steals a legendary coffin from the East Temple. It is said that he who possesses the coffin will have all his wishes granted. But all Grave wants is a

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OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE BLOODS OUT

RINKY-DINK BRINKE

BLOOD REAPER

Silver Nitrate Entertainment

Promiscuous teen campers? Drunk girls getting naked? An axe-wielding serial killer? Hell, you had me at "promiscuous." Nothing new here to any horror fan worth his weight in bloodsoaked sleeping bags, I know, but the fact that Scream Queen Brinke Stevens stars seemed like the promise of a payoff. What a mistake! The gas mask-clad killer in *Blood Reaper* has a pretty specific modus operandi in that he only kills during a full moon... and when it's a leap year (?), but doesn't follow that too well as the majority of the killings here happen during the day. A lot of running and screaming, a never-nude Brinke and a lackluster stack of bodies doesn't help this Boy Scout even begin to pitch a tent.

Body Count: 9

Accuracy of Cover Art: 0%



BLOODLINE

Lionsgate Home Entertainment

God bless Lionsgate for trolling deep in the cinematic delete bin to dredge up trash we can compare good movies to. In *Bloodline*, three teens are dead after a camping vacation turns into a gory massacre, thanks to an axe-wielding, disfigured autistic kid. He disappears into the forest to hide with a homeless drifter while his older brother tries to cope with the psychological fallout. But when the body count continues to rise we question who the real killer is. A compelling storyline, promising direction and solid acting get flushed down the toilet, however, when the plot takes a turn that the director may have thought was clever but comes off as brain-damaged. At least the DVD makes a good tribute.

Body Count: 12

Accuracy of Cover Art: 10%

A THROWAWAY TWIST



THE BLOODLETTING:

VAMPIRE SCROLLS

Maple Pictures

All hell breaks loose when some college students discover a vampire in their midst intent on claiming them as either brood or breakfast (instead of Count Chocula, I guess). This is low-budget filmmaking to be sure, and though there are some impressive fight scenes considering the budget, the poor quality of the video is a considerable distraction. Apparently, the competition was pretty light for the 2004 New York International Film and Video Festival, as *The Bloodletting* won for Best Horror Film, even though the hyper-fast, wall-clinging, drooling, roaring vampire attack has been done to death. Oh, and if you're going to title a movie *The Bloodletting: Vampire Scrolls*, you really should mention these vampir scrolls at least once.

Body Count: 9

Accuracy of Cover Art: 0%

VIDEO DEAD DUD



Last Chance Lance



good fight. This he gets in the form of a rockabilly-coiffed rival samurai, a cowardly monk from the temple and a nameless, ass-kicking female angel, all of whom compete for possession of the pilfered box. What's in it? The Goddess of Destruction, of course — a Lucifer/Shiva-like being whose sole purpose is the destruction of Heaven and Earth. It sounds much more serious than it is.

Abiologist humour abounds in *Death Trance*, much of it in the form of a young girl with supernatural powers who follows the coffin around and refuses to let Grave eat, going so far as to resurrect a pig he's about to chop on. Throw in a forbidden forest, dozens of cowlled zombies, a pair of humanoid spiders, a mysterious sword and some kick-ass martial arts play and you've got yourself one entertaining flick.

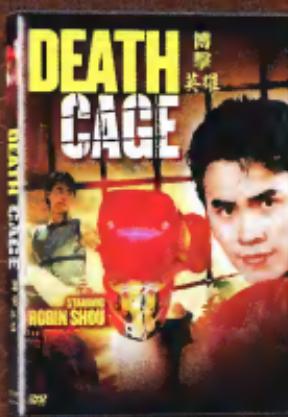
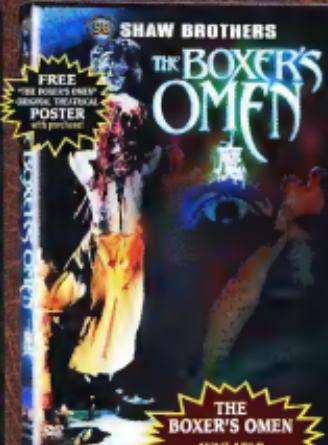
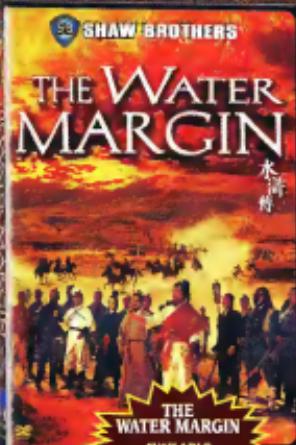
Death Trance is so fun because Shimomura favours the absurd over genre rules and logic. It's set in "an unknown time, an unknown place" but basically it's a samurai period piece, except its lead wears modern-day boots, rocket launchers are an acceptable form of combat and sometimes Grave's enemies ride motorcycles! Such contempt for the rules could come off as sloppiness with a lesser filmmaker, but in Shimomura's capable hands, it's genius.

The director's debut is stylish and exciting, but also tempers the omnipresent action with unexpected moments of tenderness (rockabilly samurai gives the little girl a doll) and awkwardness (Grave beats his opponents near death in an often graceless manner). This combo of accomplished cool and dramatic realism makes *Death Trance* both entertaining and endearing.

Sean Plemmer

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Filmmaker Brett Piper has a reputation for putting the T&A in B-movies, but as his latest Misty Mundae collaboration, *SHOCK-O-RAMA*, spells out, he knows his classic monster movies to the letter.

MUNDAE AT THE DRIVE-IN

by Last Chance Lance
and Dave Alexander

Just for once I'd like to be in a feature that isn't a complete and utter embarrassment, that doesn't make me cringe at the thought of people fucking watching it." Those are pretty prophetic words, deliciously spouted by pouting scream queen Misty Mundae in *Shock-O-Rama*, the most ambitious release to date from Shock-O-Rama Cinema (an imprint of Pop Cinema, formerly El Cinema, whose balls are just big enough to name their new film after their own label).

Fans of the company's campy, low-budget, boobs 'n' blood soft-core horror fare perk up at the sight of the studio's starlet in the credits. This time, however, Mundae is cast in a film that not only delivers the usual bloodsoaked T&A pleasures — it's also an accomplished and unusually thoughtful tribute to the sci-fi/horror drive-in movies of yesteryear.

"I've always loved those kinds of movies," says writer/director Brett Piper (*Big Me!*, *The Screamring Dead*). "I sometimes regret that I couldn't have made movies during that era. I think if I had, some of my movies would have become classics by now. And I say that in all due modesty — after all, I'd be competing with stuff like *Attack of the Crab Monsters* and *War of the Colossal Beast*."

Presented as a two-story anthology with a clever wraparound tale à la *Creepshow*, *Shock-O-Rama* spotlights fed-up B-movie scream queen Rebecca Raven (Mundae), who is axed by studio execs planning to replace her with younger, more buxom talent. In need of a vacation, she holes up in a remote country farmhouse, but unwittingly awakens a Satan-worshipping zombie. Soon,

Rebecca's wielding a chainsaw and spouting one-liners as she hunts down her undead adversary.

Given the obvious parallel between actress and character, it's not surprising Mundae clocks in one of her best performances to date, naturally delivering her foul-mouthed, self-reflexive lines.

"I wanted to write something specifically for Misty and it seemed like a funny idea to play with her public persona," Piper explains.

The film's first story-within-a-story is *Mechanachnia*, featuring an alien spaceship crash landing in a junkyard and the resulting battle as the craft's diminutive crew fights the junkyard owner and his girlfriend, played by B-staple Caitlin Ross. The aliens — as well as the giant robot they build out of used cars and construction equipment — are brought to life with stop-motion animation painstakingly created by Piper himself.

"We also spent a relatively high amount, for an El production, on sets, so ultimately there wasn't a lot left over for special effects," he notes. "Fortunately, the way I do effects never costs much anyway. It's very labour intensive but doesn't eat up much money. If it takes me all night to do a six-second stop-motion shot, all that really costs is a dollar or so for electricity."

The film's other story, *Lonely Are The Brain*,

features AJ Khan and Julian Wells, both of whom manage to keep their clothes on for about ten seconds before they're wrapped up in a lesbian/succubus lustfest. This more typically El-style content also features an oversized brain from the future that feeds on the nightmares of young women. Loaded with gore, the movie boasts some very clever film and creature effects.

Piper says *Shock-O-Rama* signals a change in direction for the recently renamed company, pointing out that it's one of the studio's biggest budget movies to date, mainly because it's shot on film instead of digital video. Far from a "complete and utter embarrassment," *Shock-O-Rama* is B-movie monster mayhem at its best, and a triumph of do-it-yourself filmmaking.

"I write, direct, do my own special effects and create my own monsters, so I could have been a combination of Cormac, Bert, Gordon and Paul Blasdel! Now I'm shooting on budgets tinier than they had and competing with stuff like the *Marx* movies," laughs Piper. "Also, if I had made movies back then I'd be 80 now. So maybe I'm better off." ■



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CINEMACABRE PRESENTS

ABBREVIATED TERRORS

BY STUART ANDREWS



Grace

GRACE

USA - 6 mins
gracehorror.com

Paul Solet splashed onto the scene in 2005 with all the messiness of an arterial spray. His deliriously deranged short, *Means To An End*, was a thoroughly ridiculous, balls-to-the-wall, splatterific parody of indie horror filmmaking which was eventually included on the *Fangs & Blood Drive II* compilation DVD. But it's his latest offering, *Grace*, which proves that Solet

has grown out of the juvenile tendencies of his earlier work and has stumbled upon a rich and abundant supply of sophisticated, mind-splitting horror.

In his exquisitely crafted short, a pregnant woman (effectively played by Liza Weil, *Star of Echoes*) loses her unborn child in a terrible car accident but refuses to accept the reality of the situation, insisting instead on carrying the dead fetus to full term. Presumably, *Grace* is the distillation of the first act of a feature-length script that was designed to give audiences a little

teaser taste of the horrors we could expect from the full-length version; regardless, Solet's film works perfectly as a short and serves as an outstanding example of narrative economy. Sumptuously drenched in bright, garish, greedy colours, *Grace* looks like an episode of *Romper Room* gone horribly mad and is riddled with enough wall-to-wall wrongness in its meagre six minutes to last the length of several features, proving that you don't need to pad your running time to create an unforgiving slalom through hell. Clearly committed to producing horror films at the absolute highest possible level of craftsmanship, Solet is destined to become a household name in the genre.

HOME DELIVERY

Spain - 12 mins
pafocasero.com

Guillermo del Toro presents this brilliantly animated short by Spanish director Elio Cuadra (*Fobos*). Based on a short story by Stephen King, *Home Delivery* recounts the misadventures of a brutish lobster fisherman named Jack Pace and his pregnant and submissive wife Maddie, who co-exist in a quiet, domestic hell on a tiny island off the coast of Maine. Little do they know that a

worm-ridden asteroid has entered Earth's orbit and is about to unleash a full-scale zombie plague upon all of humanity. One fateful day, Jack meets an untimely demise at sea only to return home to his Maddie as a drooling, undead fiend with one thing on his mind: to feast upon her lovely young brains.

With cell animated figures cast against computer-generated backgrounds, *Home Delivery* is a hyperkinetic and ultra-stylized roller coaster of epic, cartoon mayhem. If *Gaspar Noé* were to direct a Walt Disney film based upon a George Romero *Dead* movie, it would probably resemble something like this. Thematically, it's rather tame and is definitely a triumph of style over substance, but without question, *Home Delivery* is pure, bona fide animated eye candy for zombie enthusiasts and cartoon aficionados alike and is essential viewing for all fans of Stephen King screen adaptations.

THE RESURRECTION APPRENTICE

USA - 13 mins
glassyeipix.com/html/mcquaid.html

Glenn McQuaid has worked as a title designer and visual effects supervisor on a number of films (including *Larry Fessenden's The Winter and Ti West's The Roost*) but *The Resurrection Apprentice* marks his directorial debut. In this superbly constructed, atmospheric short, young Arthur Blake is forced to enter the sordid world of grave robbing in order to help feed his family. He's taken under the wing of veteran grave plunderer Willy (Fessenden) who imparts upon him all the tricks of the trade.

Thanks to Mai Iskander's glorious cinematography, an ordinary New Jersey park is magically transformed into a mystical, fog-drenched London cemetery. But without question, it's Fessenden who steals the show here. Not since Dick Van Dyke first professed his unnatural love for cleaning up crocodile have we seen such grand-scale cartoon-cockney scenery chewing, Truly magnificent stuff!



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INDIE TERROR FEST!

BY STUART ANDREWS

THIS ISSUE: INDIE DOCS!

CELLULOID HORROR

breedproductions.com

If you think your town could use a full-scale horror film festival, complete with exclusive premieres and famous guests, and if you've often wondered what it would take to launch such a crackpot scheme, then Ashley Fester's documentary *Celluloid Horror* is the film for you. The subject is Kier-La Janisse, former director of Vancouver's now defunct Cinemuerte film festival, which ran for seven successive years and came to an end in October 2006. Fester's intimate portrait study captures one woman's quest to take arms against a sea of troubles and to channel her obsessive, lifelong passion for horror movies into a critically viable and thoroughly kick-ass film fest, all while battling a completely unresponsive local media (shame on you, Vancouver!). With appearances by a plethora of genre icons (notably Udo Kier, Jean Rollin, Jörg Buttgereit and Jeff Lieberman) and some priceless scenes of festival spontaneity – including Kier's impromptu live translation for a screening of *Black Belly of the Tarantula* and an unfortunately patron repeatedly passing out in the lobby after walking out of the traumatic *Cannibal Holocaust* – *Celluloid Horror* is riddled with enough deliciously satisfying fanboy moments to leave horror fanatics and festival fans salivating.



HORROR BUSINESS

horrorbusinessmovie.com



This 2005 documentary is still actively touring the festival circuit and seems to be achieving a certain iconic status within the DIY indie horror scene. Director Christopher P. Garretano spent two years travelling all over the United States visiting horror conventions and low-budget film sets to gather footage for *Horror Business* but unfortunately the result is a wildly unfocused documentary that functions sort of like a *Decline of the Western Civilization* for ultra-low-budget horror hacks. Utilizing endless interviews with indie directors who painfully grapple with a limited capacity for self-reflection, *Horror Business*

offers zero insight into either the horror genre or the filmmaking process itself. More interestingly, Garretano catches up with Mark Bonishad, the lunatic shockmeister profiled in the hugely popular 1999 documentary *American Movie*. Surprisingly, Bonishad does not seem to have benefited one iota from the massive exposure he received with that film. The only difference being that the endearing intensity and passion for the filmmaking process he exhibited in *American Movie* appears to have been significantly stifled by a progressively worsening affinity for alcohol and the crushing weight of cruel reality. Garretano is currently in production on a follow-up to this doc entitled *Son of Horror Business*, and hopefully he'll fork out the dough for a proper editor.

THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS HAUNTED HOUSE

generationfear.com

This so-called documentary begins flaccidly enough with about six seconds of B-roll footage followed by a poorly lit interview featuring millionaire software developer, Richard Carroll, owner of Britannia Manor in Austin, Texas, which from 1988 to 1994 hosted one of the most elaborate and expensive adult-themed haunted houses in the United States. Exactly three minutes and 25 seconds later – Wham, Bam, Thank You, Ma'am – the credits roll on this premature cinema-jacqueline. Puzzled, my first impression was that we'd been sent some sort of teaser trailer, as the DVD box claims that the footage included in the doc was taken from a longer feature project entitled *Generation Fear*. But after visiting the movie's website and investigating the situation a little further, I discovered to my continued amazement that the filmmakers are so absolutely convinced that *The World's Most Famous*

Haunted House is a bona fide, legitimate mini-documentary that they're even taking orders for it online (albeit for the cost of shipping and handling). But perhaps the most absurd feature is the hour's worth of "behind the scenes" special features. A huge gallery of stills, a ton of archive footage and a walking tour of said haunted house featuring a gaggle of squealing nerdlies results in some of the least watchable druck I've had the misfortune to witness in quite some time. It



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REISSUES



LET'S SCARE JESSICA TO DEATH

A '70s curiosity that just might scare you to death.

STILL SCARY

LET'S SCARE JESSICA TO DEATH (1971)

Starring Zohra Lampert, Barton Heyman and Mandie Costello

Directed by John D. Hancock

Written by John D. Hancock and Lee Kalcheim
Paramount Home Entertainment

It is difficult to describe the pleasure one feels when discovering a truly great horror film. *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* is a familiar title, but I had never actually seen the movie prior to Paramount's recent bone-bones DVD release. That said, it's a subtle, overlooked classic worthy of every *Rue Morgue* reader's attention.

The gorgeous Zohra Lampert stars as Jessica, a fragile woman who moves from New York to a tiny Connecticut town with her musician husband Duncan (Barton Heyman) and their best friend Woody (Kevin O'Connor). Jessica is recovering from a breakdown, and the rustic country home is meant to soothe her jangled nerves. But the trio's attempts to start a new life growing apples is hampered by the unfriendly townsfolk (who all seem to sport mysterious bandages) and the strange appearance of Emily (Mandie

Costello), a seductive redhead they find squatting in their home.

Emily is beautiful, sexy and powerful. Jessica, weak as she is, senses her husband's attraction to this stranger but invites her to stay with them regardless. Nature takes its course, and Emily and Duncan become lovers. But is Emily even alive? While mining the house for antiques, Jessica finds an old portrait of Abigail Bishop, a young bride who occupied the house a century earlier and drowned in the local cave. She is rumoured to still be alive, draining the blood of the local townsmen. Abigail and Emily also look suspiciously the same.

Director John D. Hancock creates a palpable sense of dread, despite many scenes being set in broad daylight. From the start our sympathies lie with Jessica, plagued as she is by whispering voices and disturbing visions. Voice-overs are normally annoying, but Lampert's gives Jessica an extra dimension, amplifying the uncertainty as to her sanity as Jessica imagines all of this or is the horror real?

Influenced as it obviously is by *Carnival of Souls* and *Night of the Living Dead*, *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* is an unique '70s curiosity that just might scare you to death, and it doesn't get much better than that.

Sean Plummer

100% CHANCE OF EVIL

THE DEVIL'S RAIN (1975)

Starring Ernest Borgnine, Tom Skerritt and William Shatner

Directed by Robert Fuest

Written by James Ashton, Gabe Essoe and Gerald Hopman

Dark Sky Films

Summing up the 1975 satanic shocker *The Devil's Rain* is no easy task. Should I start by citing the eccentric cast, which includes Ernest Borgnine, Bill Shatner, John Travolta and His Royal Cloven-ness Anton LaVey? Or perhaps I should carefully lay out the nutty plot which involves a centuries-cursed family, a hidden "who's who of Satanism" log book and a demonic cowboy church? Or how about I just skip to the climax, an FX oozefest pretty much guaranteed to melt your mind faster than it melts Travolta's pre-Welcome Back Kotter puss?

Yes folks, *The Devil's Rain* by Robert Fuest (*The Abominable Dr Phibes* and its equally awesome sequel) is one of the wackiest horror films of the 1970s – and that's saying a lot. Initially billed as a "faithful" peek into the real world of Satanism, the producers of this PG-rated creeper had the notion to not only cast the notorious LaVey and his wife as

the High Priest and Priestess, but keep him on as a "freakin' technical adviser! It's all just delightful horse-shit, of course, and by the time Shatner, as the long-suffering Mark Preston, goes shirtless, turns evil and does a pair of black contacts, you'll be primed for one the best endings in horror history.

Before the Nazis in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* saw God and turned to goo, *The Devil's Rain* pissed down on its cast and liquefied them, one by bloody one. Words cannot do justice to this disgusting, over-the-top finale that sees nearly every character turned into molten flesh jelly. But Travolta butter aside, there are so many other things to enjoy in this sleazy and nihilistic camp cult classic, which is never, even for a moment, remotely dull. Premiering on DVD, Dark Sky once again rolls out the red for a film thought long dead. A must-see for phony Satan-o-philes and genuine Shatner-o-philes alike.

Chris Alexander



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A V A I L A B L E N O W

Some hospitals don't have a 13th Floor. Soete More Hospital shouldn't have had a third. It's something a group of five college students discover when they enter an abandoned hospital on Halloween night only to discover that rumors about the glass being haunted are very real. Stars: Dee Wallace-Steele (Cujo, The Frighteners) Trish Goff (The Graveyard), Jillian Ghosh (Death Tuned) and Rachel Melvin (TV's Days of Our Lives).



A glee muted Tasmanian Devil is stolen from a lab by two eco-activists and escapes over an old cemetery where a group of unsuspecting college students are making a zombie film. The hideous creature takes up residence in the old mining tunnels beneath the graveyard, feasting on both the living and the dead. Stars: Rudolf Beauhier (Phantom, Babes in Toyland), Kristen Novak (Death Tuned), Brad Carlson (TV's One Tree Hill) & Peter Sánchez.

CEMETERY GATES



FIRST LOOK

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Tromeo and Juliet: Troma goes Shakespeare in one of the studio's finest efforts

NO HOLDS BARD

TROMEO AND JULIET (1996) TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Starring Will Keenan, Jane Jensen and Debbie Rochon
Directed by Lloyd Kaufman
Written by James Gunn, Jason Green and Lloyd Kaufman
Troma Entertainment

"You fuckpods make me sick!" Shakespeare didn't actually write that line, but one likes to think the immortal Bard would have wholeheartedly approved of Troma's take on English literature's most famous tragic love story — the man, after all, was not without a sense of humour. *The Toxic Avenger* may be Troma's flagship franchise, and *Terror Firmer* remains unparisched for sheer anarchic, but *Tromeo and Juliet* — part satire, part update, part love letter — will likely be remembered as the company's most inspired



and fully realized effort (one co-penned by no less than *Slither* writer/director James Gunn). And unlike most Troma fare, this one owes much of its success to superb performances — after all, no film or play has ever depended so heavily upon chemistry between leads as *Romeo and Juliet*, and seldom has said chemistry been so genuine as it is here between stars Will Keenan and Jane Jensen. Of course (SPOILER ALERT!), the single most perverse twist introduced here is a happy ending, albeit a typically Troma-tically twisted one.

The extras on this double-disc release, while extensive even by Troma's generous standards, are nonetheless marred by the complete absence of the two leads, and you bet Uncle Lloyd ain't taking that lying down. While seizing the opportunity to take swipes at *Troma/Terror Firmer* star and one-time Troma casting director Keenan (who apparently balked over money), Kaufman goes easier on Jensen. "She owes me nothing, in fact, I probably owe her," he remarks in an interview segment.

But why dwell on the negatives? This bitch is jammed up to the gills with four (!)

commentary tracks, featurettes, interviews, footage Kaufman shot at Eli Roth's birthday party (?) and an assload more. Actor Stephen Blackhart displays his sex from a shirt gone awry, while indie film renaissance woman Debbie Rochon fesses up that she is not actually bisexual and hence was not a gushing wet mess during her onscreen grapefest with Jensen (sigh...).

I'm still hankering for *Thomomacheth*, so get off your ass, Lloyd! The Scottish play awaits your "bad touch." Okay, I'm outta here — fucking is such sweet sorrow. (Aw, c'mon, it's a Troma film.)

John W. Bowen

FEMME FETAL

BABY BLOOD (1990)

Starring Emmanuelle Escourrou, Jean-François Gallotte and Christian Sinninger
Directed by Alain Robak
Written by Alain Robak and Serge Cukier
Anchor Bay Entertainment

You don't expect to obtain great insight into the mother-child bond by watching French splatter flicks, but 1990's *Baby Blood* (a.k.a. *The Evil Inside*) balances its ample servings of gore with (what I understand is) the love-hate relationship pregnant women have with their unborn children.

Emmanuelle Escourrou stars as Yanki, a beautiful circus performer under the thumb of Lohman (Christian Sinninger), a brutal circus owner. She craves escape and gets her opportunity with the appearance of a new leopard that disturbs the circus' other cats. They sense something is wrong and their instincts are confirmed when the beast's exploded remains are found. What escapes turns out to be a teratoma that crawls into Yanki's womb.

Pregnant and terrified, she flees, but Lohman tracks her to a decrepit Parisian apartment. His mander at Yanki's hands is

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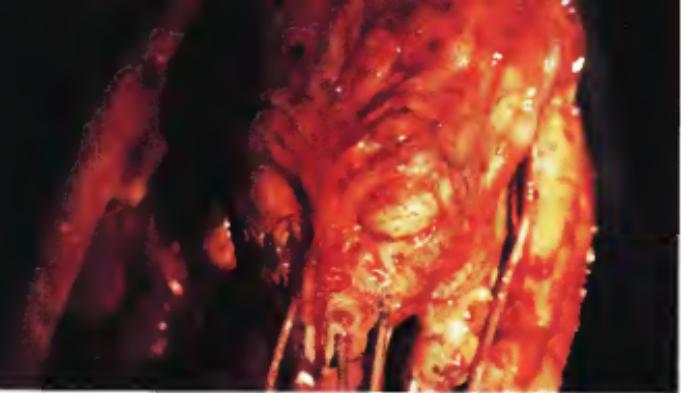
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Baby Blood: A French take on the horrors of pregnancy

just the first, as her unborn "child" demands blood in order to grow. Oh yes, the entity inhabiting Yanka's womb speaks to its "mother", alternately threatening and cajoling her with its needs. She's initially horrified by its demand that she kill for it. But as the months pass, she grows more confident and begins to like the ritual of seducing stupid men — so many of whom have abused her in the past — and bleeding them dry.

Indeed, director Alain Robak's film could be read as a feminist warning: guys, treat women like shit and die. None of the male characters here are sympathetic, all of them are pathetic, needy, abusive, callous or misogynist assholes. That the only tenderness or understanding Yanka experiences is at the clawed hands of her demonic offspring, is both funny and sad. But this is no *My Dinner With Yanka*. *Baby Blood* is a gruesome exercise in comedy and horror filled to the brim with flying innards, decapitations, and all manner of excessive exanguination.

Be warned, though. The American dubbing is horrible, so stick to the original French language track, especially because the Americanized voice of the "baby" is nowhere near as creepy as the high-pitched synthetic wail heard in the French version. Plus, the

"restored" scenes (the film was heavily cut for American theatrical release) have no dubbing, so you'll have to endure subtitled anyway.

Sean Plummer

HANK BUT NO HANK

HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER, PART 2 — MASK OF SANITY (1998)

Starring Neil Giunta, Rich Komenich and Kate Walsh

Written and directed by Chuck Parello
Dark Sky Films

It's been twenty years since John McNaughton's *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* cast its huge shadow on the whole murder genre. If

1998's *Henry 2* is intended as a sequel, it has big shoes to fill and little to fill them with. Director Chuck Parello (who would go on to make *Ed Gein*)

and *The Hillside Strangler*) revisits all the same ideas here as the prequel, but to negligible effect.

Unloved, homeless and unemployed in a new small town, Henry (Neil Giunta) can't win with people. He finds a job cleaning out port-o-potties at a construction site and is taken in by co-worker Kat (Rich Komenich). Henry soon becomes assistant to his benefactor at his night job, burning down buildings for insurance fraud. Soon after, using Kat's arson secrets for leverage, Henry makes him his new One, and the scenario inevitably degenerates into ye olde killing spree.

To his credit, Giunta actually plays a convincing creep, just not a convincing Henry. He's short and stout, which doesn't necessarily work against him. He still comes across well as a loner with a screw loose, but it's impossible not to hold this up to Michael Rooker's original, definitive take on the character.

The film does set up a few interesting subplots, but Parello doesn't exploit their full potential, and they flounder — most notably regarding Kat's death-obsessed teenage niece, who takes a shine to Henry. When he refuses her advances and she kills herself in the family living room, the film simply moves along to the



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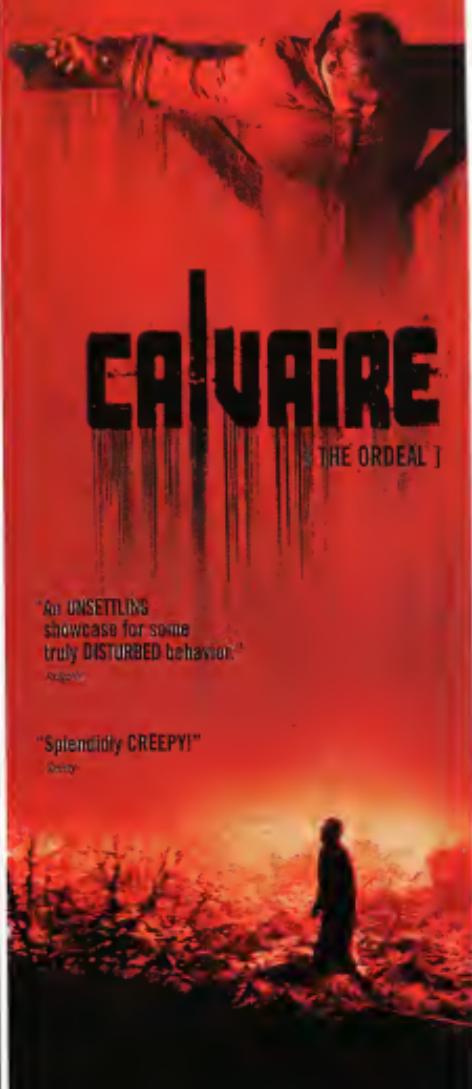
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DUMPY DOUBLE SHOT

BLOOD OF THE VAMPIRE (1958)

Starring Vincent Ball, Donald Wolff and Victor Maddern
Directed by Henry Cass
Written by Jimmy Sangster
Dark Sky Films

Heading up the latest entry in Dark Sky Films' Drive-in Double Feature DVD line, creaky British period horror flick *Blood of the Vampire* sucks pretty much everything but plasma. Based on a fairly decent script by moonlighting Hammer scribe Jimmy Sangster (*The Curse of Frankenstein*), the film tries to offer a modern, scientific interpretation of vampirism but gets bogged down by cut-rate Gothic theatrics.

Set in generic 19th-century Europe, *Borv* sees Dr. John Pierre (Vincent Ball) sentenced to life in a prison for the criminally insane for a crime he did not commit. In light of his medical training, the asylum's warden, Dr. Calistratus (Donald Wolff), enlists Pierre for secret blood transfusion experiments. Eventually, Pierre discovers the sinister reason for his research: Calistratus suffers from a rare blood disease that requires intravenous replenishment, and he has been tapping his inmates to satisfy his constant need for fresh blood.

Compared to Hammer's *Horror of Dracula*, also written by Sangster and released the same year, *Blood of the Vampire* is a blatantly cheap, dull knock-off that suffers from a troubling lack of actual vampires or blood. The film's attempt at Gothic atmosphere is nothing short of embarrassing, with tacky pasteboard sets, matter-of-fact lighting and shoddily crafted makeup — a droopy eye appliance on token deformed assistant Carl (Victor Maddern) has plainly visible edges and conspicuously moves around between scenes. If only the actors weren't so gravely deadpan, *Blood of the Vampire* could almost be considered a parody of the Hammer style.

Really, the sole interesting aspect of the film is the performance by Wolff, a somewhat distinguished Shakespearean actor who performs complicated facial acrobatics with the most flamboyantly evil eyebrows imaginable. Excessive ham-slinging aside, Wolff's Calistratus is ultimately more tragic than threatening, since his malady makes him sympathetically human and always fallible, unlike an actual vampire.

Even the disc's second feature, *The Halfway Club* (1961), another Sangster-penned Hammer imitation, can't save this DVD. Despite a cameo by Peter Cushing and more believable Gothic touches, it's actually a tedious swashbuckling historical drama with no horror elements at all. Hopefully Dark Sky's Drive-in Double Features don't become simply a budget-priced dumping ground for substandard cult films.

Paul Corupe

next scene. Typically stark but not believable.

The dialogue wavers somewhere between so-good-it's-bad and just bad ("Come back here, you faggot, I'm gonna kill myself!"). The fight scenes make little to no sense with Henry's stature (picture Danny DeVito to overpowering multiple lumberjacks), and, otherwise, there are some graphic decapitations, a vaguely creepy matter-of-fact throat-slitting, and a notable screwdriver up the nose, but that's about it.

In the extras, director Parella talks about his attempt to capture the "compelling criminal element of *Henry*" with this version, but he doesn't come close. Whereas the cheapness of the first *Henry* worked merrily in its favour, *Henry 2* comes off like the answer to a question no one asked.

Chris Colahan

OVERRIPE CHEESE

THE PHANTOM (1931)

Starring Gunn Williams, Allene Ray and William Gould
Written and Directed by Alan James
Alpha Video

It's almost heartwarming to know that as bad as horror knock-offs can turn out today, 75 years ago, they could be just as terrible. An early talkie with a wildly convoluted plot, *The Phantom* jarringly switches gears from a standard Old Dark House flick to a mad doctor shocker halfway through, but still can't scare up any tension despite pilfering visual cues from everything from *The Cat and the Canary* to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

The film begins when a nuttily murderous, the Phantom, escapes from death row and sends a threatening telegram to DA John Hampton (Wilfred Lucas). The prosecutor's daughter Ruth (Allene Ray), and her fiancé, newspaper reporter Dick Mallory (Gunn Williams), come to the rescue that night, scaring the killer away from the Hamptons' secret passage-laden home. Convinced the Phantom is holed up at an insane asylum run by the shadowy Dr. Waldon (William Gould), the young heroes decide to investigate, but Ruth is kidnapped and delivered to the demented doc by the Phantom's sidekick, "The Thing" (Sheldon Lewis in a frightening wig), who creeps around like Bela Lugosi's *Dr. M* doppelganger, frantically wriggling his fingers. Just as Waldon is about to perform some



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Body Count, Murder 4 Hire - CD

After single-handedly kick-starting Gangsta Rap with 1987's *Rhyme Pays, Ice-T* went viral in 1992 with *Body Count*, whose self-titled debut ended with *Cap Killer*. The track was protested so vehemently by conservatives, the religious right, the NRA and the FBI, that Time-Warner had the song deleted in subsequent pressings of the album.



Shogun Assassin - DVD

Available for the first time on DVD! A shogun master turns against Lone Wolf, his faithful hand-cutting general servant. Lone wolf is forced into battle against the shogun, the shogun's wife, and a host of shogun ninja warriors... "Shogun Assassin" was adapted from two Japanese films, "Baby-Cart at the River Styx" and "Sword of Vengeance."



The Mummy's Kiss: Second Dynasty - DVD

Museum director Dr. Zita Fumetax, empowered by the Egyptian Goddess Neptys, regains her lost youth by dispatching a living mummy to kidnap sexy young women from whom she steals their "Kiss" or "Spiritual Twins," turning them into zombie-like love slaves.

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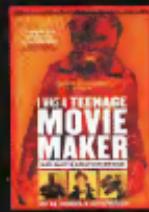
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The Haunted Lantern - DVD

Strange events plague Shin and his new family during the Festival of the Dead. He has nightmares of a woman disappearing in a supernatural spray of blood and grotesque visions of a monster. With the help of a mysterious priest, Shin must banish these evil spirits or he will be haunted until he is a ghost himself!



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NOT THE MOST ACCURATE TITLE

BLOOD BATH (1976)

Starring Harve Presnell, Jack Somack and Curt Dawson

Written and directed by Joel M. Reed

Subversive Cinema

Director Joel M. Reed is best known for the woefully misunderstood, jet-black exploitation satire *Bloodsucking Freaks* (1978), a film so deliriously offensive even *Troma* head Lloyd Kaufman distances himself from it in his introduction to that company's DVD release. Reed takes the same tongue-in-cheek approach in this comic tribute to horror anthology films, but opts not to rip out said tongue with a pair of pliers.

Instead, *Blood Bath* follows the conventional anthology formula. The wraparound story features Harve Presnell as Peter Brown, a pretentious, low-budget horror filmmaker who scorns the supernatural, even though he's rumoured to have married the daughter of the Devil. The wrap party of his latest picture is the device used to tie a series of five short stories together, as his guests regale the director with their own EC Comics-styled tales of the occult.

Each one ends in a guffaw-inducing twist — there's a hitman plagued by an errant briefcase time bomb, an unhappy accountant whose dream of being a Napoleonic war hero turns into a nightmare, a greedy moneylender trapped in his personal vault with the ghost of a man he ruined, and a vain, self-out martial arts expert who rues learning the "Tenth Secret of Shaolin." Of course, the wraparound has its own twist ending, one that manages to be both goofy and surprisingly downbeat.

The film is a ton o' fun, and although the budgetary constraints are painfully apparent, the slapped-together look merely enhances the charm. The cast is interesting — Doris Roberts (the matrarch in *Everybody Loves Raymond*) is instantly recognizable, onscreen tough guy/ex-porn star Sonny Landham (*Pollgeist*, *Predator*) isn't, and P.J. Soles (*Halloween*) makes her blink-and-you'll-miss-it cinematic debut. This was the last film for Presnell for twenty years, before a sudden career revival made him one of the busiest character actors of the last decade.

More interesting than the film itself is the 41-minute talking head featurette *Taking a Blood Bath*, as Reed, art director Ron Sullivan (a.k.a. infamous porn director Henri Pachard) and actors Landham and Jerry Lacy reminisce about the New York exploitation/adult film industry of the '70s. Reed also provides a full-length commentary track, plus there are nine text bios, making for a fascinating and comprehensive package.

The Gore-Met



sort of vague brain operation on the girl, square-jawed Dick arrives to save the day and unmask the Phantom.

After a well-staged jailbreak that has the Phantom jump on top of a moving boxcar before being whisked away by plane, this plodding poverty-row bummer gets caught up in its convoluted narrative, lulling the viewer to sleep with tedious subplot after subplot. Awkwardly helmed by James, a prolific director of shoot 'em up westerns, the *Phantom* is ultimately far more interesting as an example of the difficulties that the studios of the silent era had adapting to the innovation of sound. In heavy-handed exposition scenes, actors stomp all over each other's dialogue and can't resist the temptation to rely on overblown pantomime. Particularly hilarious are the scenes with veteran B-movie beauty Allene Ray, who found herself out of a career when viewers got an earful of her squeaky Southern drawl.

Never much more than a creaky curiosity, it wouldn't really be a loss if *The Phantom* disappeared into thin air entirely.

Paul Coepe

INSANE IN THE MEMBRANE

BRANIAC (1961)

Starring Abel Salazar, Luis Aragon and Rubén Rojo

Directed by Chano Urueta

Written by Federico Curiel, Antonio Orellana and Alfredo Torres Portillo

CasaNegra Films

CasaNegra's latest Mexi-horror DVD rediscovery, *Braniac*, doesn't quite live up to its newly bestowed tagline: "The most bizarre horror movie. Ever." But it's still a worthwhile campy creature oddity that delights and confounds in equal measures.

The film finds prolific B-movie master Urueta (*The Witch's Mirror* and over 30 other '60s films) back in Bava territory, opening on a 1661 inquisition where heretic Baron Vitelius (Abel Salazar) is tortured and executed for his evil deeds. Somehow, he manages to project himself into a passing comet, and 300 years later, the Baron returns to Mexico City inside the mentor as a monstrously ugly, devil-headed creature intent on dispensing vengeance on the descendants of those who put him to death.

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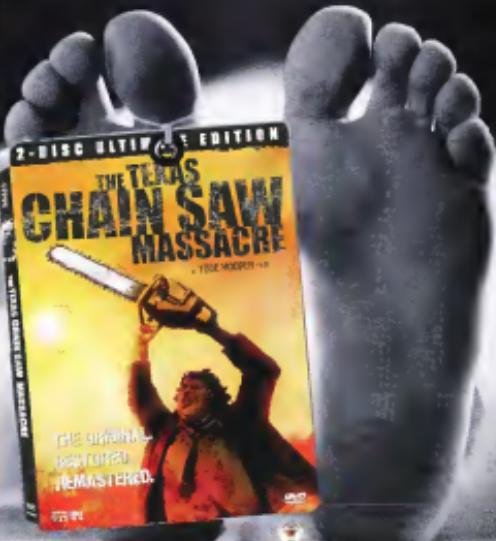
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One of Mexico's strangest cinematic achievements

Bearing a few logic-defying details, it's not so much the well-worn plot of *Brauniac* that's so bizarre, it's the monster itself. With tubular fingers, feral tufts of hair and a pulsating forehead, the tattered-up Baron kills by thrusting his foot-long forked tongue into the base of a victim's skull and vacuuming out the grey matter — with any leftovers discreetly stored in a silver chalice back at his swanky castle. Luckily, the Baron — being the Brauniac that he is — has also arrived equipped with a human disguise, so he can charm his potential victims at dinner parties before hitting the brain buffet, at least until a pair of local astronomers catch on and attempt to stop him.

Where CaseNegrin's restoration work on their earlier releases scrubbed a layer of cheesiness off of underappreciated Mexican horror classics, there's no disguising the fact that *Brauniac* is grade-Z schlock through and through. The effects are unapologetically incompetent — the Baron's comet taxi is simply a rock lowered on plainly visible fishing wire, and, hilariously, all the "outdoor" scenes clearly feature actors standing against badly blown-up photographs. It's amazing that Urueta directed the wonderfully effective *The Witch's Mirror* around the same time as this exploitation curio, since this film really

couldn't be cheaper or more ineptly put together.

That's not to say that *Brauniac* isn't a wildly fun viewing experience, though. Sure, there are passable attempts at shadowy atmosphere, and at least one decent effect where the Baron sees the faces of his persecutors appear overtop their relatives, but the film is mostly worth seeing just for its peculiar mind-sucking demon, which alone has made the film an undeniably cult hit and a must for fans of outré cinema.

Paul Corupe

EERIE EUROSHOCK

DARK WATERS (1994)

Starring Louise Salter, Manya Kapnist and Anna Rose Phillips
Directed by Mariano Baino
Written by Andy Bark
MuShame

No Shame Films doesn't fuck around when it comes to rolling out the blood-spattered carpet for their flagship releases. The ever-climbing cult horror DVD reissue imprint already blew our minds with their remastered Emilio Miraglia double-disc box set complete with *Red Queen* figurine earth-

er this year. But their resurrection of the little-seen experimental horror mood piece *Dark Waters* is incredibly over-the-top — in a good way.

Previously available only on extremely hard-to-find VHS and DVD editions under the title *Dead Waters*, director Mariano Baino's nightmarish low-budget feature is a reverent nod to the classics of Mario Bava, the paranoid Cthulhu scribblings of H.P. Lovecraft and the sacrilegious sneer of Ken Russell's *The Devils*. In it, recently orphaned Elizabeth (Louise Salter, *Interview With the Vampire*) travels to a remote island convent in the Black Sea to unravel the mystery of her family's fortune. She encounters a sea of creepy nuns and bizarre rituals centred around a shadowy pact and, well, a big rubber monster.

Dark Waters, an Italian/Russian/British co-production, was apparently a gruelling labour of love for all involved and the resulting picture isn't perfect — the plot is sketchy and the dubbed-in-post sound makes the film sometimes feel cheap. Where Baino's movie soars is in his almost Alejandro Jodorowsky-like sense of surreal set pieces combined with a quasi-naturalist Werner Herzog aesthetic. Beautiful, endless shots of crashing waves, mountains and jagged reefs vie for space against Catholic perversion, slamy gore and burning nuns.

The double-disc DVD features a remastered anamorphic print of the feature, detailed documentary, deleted scenes, bloopers and every single short film the visionary Baino has made to date. *Theo NoShame* goes and sticks this glorious set inside a huge plastic and cardboard box with a resin replica of the pivotal demonic amulet featured in the film! It's a decadent presentation of a too-long neglected slice of eerie modern Euroshock. Kudos to the company for having the balls to take a chance on something so obscure.

Chris Alexander

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NOT AS COOL AS
WE REMEMBERED IT

THIS ISLAND EARTH (1955)

Starring Rex Reason, Faith Domergue and Jeff Morrow
Directed by Joseph Newman
Written by Franklin Coen and Edward G. O'Callaghan
Universal

Nostalgia has this nasty habit of reshaping memory, of jettisoning the bad in favour of some half-remembered idyll that likely never existed in the first place. High school traumas are forgotten in the wake of reunions, abusive parents are forgiven on their deathbeds, and bad vintage sci-fi becomes "classic" thanks to the fond memories of baby boomers and fanboys with a monster fetish.

This Island Earth is not a good movie.

Great special effects, yes, but not good. It's probably best remembered for its big-brained, claw-handed "mutant", which has become an icon of '50s sci-fi cinema. But a few minutes of monster mayhem can't compensate for dodgy science, nonsensical plotting and overblown dialogue.

Alpha male Rex Reason stars as Dr Cal Meacham, a brilliant scientist as comfortable flying jets as playing with test tubes. When futuristic equipment starts showing up at his lab, he contacts the company that supplied it and ends up building an "micro-visor", a multi-functional device which allows Cal to contact Exeter, the mysterious figure who supplied the parts. As it turns out, building the device was a test, which makes Cal worthy to join a group of his fellow scientists in a project to benefit all humanity.

But why are the scientists wary of Exeter? And why won't Cal's old flame, Dr Ruth Adams (Domergue), acknowledge their past fling? Might it have something to do with Exeter being an alien from the planet Metalluna, which is under attack by the evil (but unseen) Zagors? Hm.

All of this underheated romance and unintriguing intrigue is merely a prelude to the filmmakers' real job – showing off their fancy-shmancy special effects ("2 years in the making"). There are some handsome shots of Metalluna which predict the more sophisticated matte paintings of 1956's *Forbidden Planet*, and the aforementioned "mutant" – introduced awkwardly and abruptly at the last minute – is an impressive and creepy creation. But the lack of character and logic (Ruth and Cal are transported to Metalluna only to escape back to Earth seemingly minutes later) made *This Island Earth* an empty piece of eye candy long before George Lucas ever picked up a camera.

Sean Plummer



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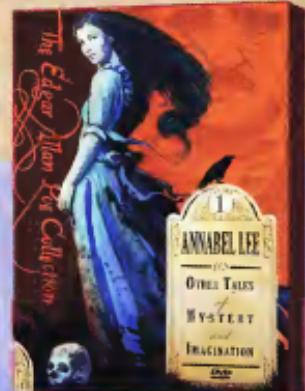
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Retromedia unlocks the mysteries of the missing link with their **BIGFOOT TERROR** DVD.

THE SASQUATCH DIARIES



When Retromedia unleashed Bigfoot Terror, their latest four-film DVD collection, we at Rue Morgue knew there was only one man for the job — resident celluloid cryptozoologist adventurer Paul Gorupe. Equipped with nothing but the DVD, a pair of field glasses and a bolt action elephant gun procured from a local antique dealer, Gorupe locked himself in his bedroom and began to prepare his review. But when he failed to meet his deadline, we knew something

had gone wrong — terribly wrong. A Rue Morgue search and rescue team was deployed to his room and found only crumpled potato chip bags, a few tattered notebook pages and a strong, musky odour lingering in the air. In the interest of science and public safety, we've reprinted the diary entries from his harrowing adventures. As for the whereabouts of Gorupe, the search continues...

DAY 1: SEARCH FOR THE BEAST (1997)

Guide: Dr. David Stone
(Rick Montana)

Awoke this morning to meet with one Dr. Stone, who has been hired to find the culprit behind a rash of teen murders in the forests of Alabama. I agree to accompany his expedition, but remain concerned about his team of fellow "researchers", which appears to be made up of shysters and muscle-bound lunkheads, each packing enough automatic firepower to make sure the missing link stays missing — forever. But just mere minutes into our journey, we stumble onto our prey, a bipedal creature, at least six-feet tall, with shaggy black fur! My excitement over this potential "Class A" sighting quickly turns to disappointment, however, when Bigfoot is observed heartily mating with a Homo sapien (female, identified as "Twetie"), and I begin to suspect that the only thing Stone and his cronies are searching for is a quick buck by making a "Hominids Gone Wild" DVD.

DAY 2: THE LEGEND OF BIGFOOT (1976)

Guide: Ivan Marx
(as himself)

My expedition continues with a whirlwind tour up the Pacific coast, as noted nature photographer Ivan Marx feverishly expounds on his controversial theory of Bigfoot's migration patterns. I always knew Marx's reputation was suspect, but after several long years hunting Bigfoot, he has finally slipped into madness, sneering at the "so-called experts" who debut his 16mm film and insisting that the forest and the lakes are "laughing" at him. The journey is a difficult one, and we are forced to cut through thick swaths of public

domain nature footage to get just a few blurry glimpses of a giant, shul-smelling creature with a sloping forehead walking off in the distance. Strangely enough, Marx and the Sasquatch never appear at the same time. Coincidence?

DAY 3: CAPTURE OF BIGFOOT (1979)

Guide: Park Ranger Steve Garrett (Stafford Morgan)

Now on the trail of the elusive white-turned Yeti in northern Wisconsin, I have learned that many of our researchers' most basic assumptions are entirely wrong. Not only are Sasquatches relatively easy to find and capture, but they love to spend time with children, and only pose a threat to the corrupt industrialists who seek to exploit their legend for money (Note to self: send urgent communiqué to Dr. Stone). In saving the Yeti and its son from a bleak future as roadside attractions, Park Ranger Garrett has presented the most powerful case for Hominid-Human relations since Harry met the Hendersons. Truly, it's we who are the monsters. You hear me world? WE ARE THE MONSTERS!

DAY 4: SHRIEK OF THE MUTILATED (1970)

Guide: Dr. Ernst Prell (Alan Brock)

Wait... no we aren't! I learn a Sasquatch has been spotted in upstate New York, viciously mauling polyester-clad college students on a research excursion with their professor, Dr. Prell. On arriving at the house of his colleague Dr. Werner, I discover that Prell is the most dedicated

cryptozoologist I've yet run into, a man who is more than happy to sacrifice the lives of his students if it means getting closer to his research goals! Still, something seems not quite right about this situation, maybe it's Werner's Native American handyman "Laughing Crow" who is mute and appears to be of Italian descent, or possibly the way Prell was licking his lips when he asked — nay, insisted — that I join the survivors on this evening's field assignment. This could be the breakthrough I've been looking for, but if I don't make it back, please remember to cancel my subscription to Yet Researcher, and donate my plaster footprint casts to the American Anthropological Research Foundation. Now, to the woods! ☺



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AS THREE GENRE-BENDING FILMS PACKAGED TOGETHER EXEMPLIFY, WHEN IT COMES TO HORROR, NOBODY THINKS OUTSIDE THE BOX SET LIKE THE JAPANESE...

BANZI! BIZARRE!

BY JASON LAPETRE

If you haven't already figured it out, Japanese genre movies don't like to play by the rules. Take, for example, the new box set from TLA Releasing comprising a trio of films screened earlier under the Philadelphia Film Festival's *Danger After Dark* banner, a program that features shocking, violent horror and action movies from around the world. None of the titles included (each of which boasts a new transfer) fall neatly into any one genre, although there's more than enough blood and mutilation here for horror fans.

Probably the most well known, Sion Sono's *Suicide Club* (2002) wins the prize for best opening scene when 54 teenage schoolgirls jump off a train platform in front of the Tokyo Express, soaking everyone else in the station with blood and setting the silly splatterfest tone of the film. Unfortunately, the mangled body of the movie then tries to climb back up onto the platform to make a serious speech about the cult-like nature of fads, the generation gap, the self-destructive nature of teenagers and some other stuff.

Sadly, it never really gets back to the entertainment level of that first scene. Instead, it becomes increasingly bizarre, even crossing over into campy musical territory at one point. That might not necessarily be a bad thing, but

even though you want it to be so weird-it's-fun, it's just too damn confusing. Although it's nice to see Ryo Ishibashi again (the protagonist/victim from Takashi Miike's *Auditor*), Sono makes many speeches and has too many left-field impulses to allow a coherent, gripping movie to emerge.

Despite the strangeness of *Suicide Club*, Takahisa Zeze's *Moon Child* (2003) is actually the most genre-crossing movie of the collection. Its confusing plot and derivative action scenes also make it the least interesting of the three. The story of a friendship between two underground vampire gangsters moves between love triangle melodrama, action and horror, but winds up as less than the sum of its parts. The two leads, Sho and Kei (played by Japanese rock stars Gackt and Hyde), fall for the same

woman while trying to climb their way up the power ladder in a dystopian future mafia underground. Unfortunately, horror gets the least attention here, and vampirism seems like more of an excuse for them to survive gunshots and generally be tragic. The action scenes owe a lot to John Woo and frequently venture into cartoon territory, which makes the shift back to romance and melodrama even more painful.

But the third tries the charm, as Yukihiko Tsutsumi's *2LDK* (2002) is easily the best of the bunch. At a trim 70 minutes, it's a lean, focused, bloody Japanese catfight extraordinaire. The movie is the product of an arrangement with producer Shinya Kawai and filmmaker Ryhei Kitamura (*Versus*) called The Dual Project. For it, both Kitamura and Tsutsumi agreed to make a feature in one week using only two actors battling in one setting. Kitamura made the samurai film *Aragami*, but Tsutsumi chose a more contemporary and universal situation: fighting roommates — specifically actresses who have auditioned for the same part. Their relationship goes from temible to homicidal over the course of the film; and both their personality breakdowns and the bodily harm they inflict on each other make for a horrifying spectacle. Tsutsumi's formal control of the film is impressive, and his original composition and claustrophobic editing make it even more enjoyable to watch as the women increasingly violate each other's personal space, eventually fighting with chainsaws and samurai swords.

As a collection, *Danger After Dark* is light on extras. Only *2LDK* has any significant special features (two behind-the-scenes featurettes), and horror purists might be disappointed by the films' shotgun approach to genre content. But for fans of new Japanese cinema, *2LDK* and the opening scene of *Suicide Club* are must-see transgressions. 

AUSTRALIAN INDIE DIRECTOR **MARK SAVAGE** DISCUSSES THREE OF HIS LITTLE-KNOWN, HYPER-VIOLENT, GENRE-DESTROYING FILMS.

BLOOD-RED REBEL

BY JOHN W. BOWEN

David Lynch, David Cronenberg, Lloyd Kaufman, John Waters, Takashi Miike and Russ Meyer share one common if paradoxical characteristic: each is basically a genre unto himself. Australia's Mark Savage may well join this august company some day, although he has yet to experience anything resembling mainstream recognition.

The latest proof of his outsider status comes in the form of *Defenceless* (2004), a unique, completely dialogue-free horror film. It stars Susanne Hausschmid (who also produced) as an environmentalist whose refusal to sign a deal with sleazy land developers results in her loved ones being brutalized and murdered. Eventually raped and killed herself, she re-emerges from the ocean as a robotic, amphibious angel of vengeance. It's one of three films in his *Savage Cinema From Down Under* collection, recently released by Subversive Cinema.

"My distributor here describes *Defenceless* as 'art-house horror', but I never go into [making] any [film] saying it's this kind of movie or that kind. I let other people decide what kind of genre they think it fits into," Savage explains over the phone from his current hideout in Los Angeles, adding, "I actually quite like Meir Zarchi's *I Spit on Your Grave* and its got aspects of that, and a French film *La Bête Humaine*, which is

about two children growing up during World War II, going around gathering up bodies of dead animals and giving them funerals."

Beauty contrasted with ugliness is a long-standing Savage trademark, and he deploys it to great effect on multiple levels in *Defenceless*,

where gorgeously photographed seascapes and rural greenery are juxtaposed with horrific violence.

"I make films about what I love and what I hate, and I'll have them in the same movie," Savage says. "I don't see anything off-kilter about having a scene that's really gentle and nostalgic followed by something really brutal or pornographic. I make that link really easily."

It's a bold move, to be sure, but even a cursory glance at his back catalogue

reveals a filmmaker who thrives on taking chances. After making dozens of Super 8 shorts in and around his native Melbourne during his teens and twenties, Savage released his first full-length feature in 1986. Included in the *Savage Cinema* collection, the ultra-violent, taboo-smashing *Marauders* follows a white-trash duo on an odyssey of matricide, rape and murder.

While clearly influenced by films like *Last House on the Left* and *Straw Dogs*, *Marauders* only hints at the diverse fare Savage would create a few years down the line — works such as 1999's *Masked Avenger Versus Ultra-Villain in the Lava of the Naked Bikini* (originally titled *The*

Masked Avenger due to its party-sniffing onanist hero), a bizarre cocktail of *Riki*-style splatter-fu, Monty Python, softcore porn, Mexican Lucha Libre and crime drama.

"My favourite character in *Masked Avenger* is Henry [the hero's browbeaten, club-footed protégé, played by Savage's brother Colin], because I do like freaks, I like people with limps," Savage notes. "I actually wore an eye patch myself between the ages of four and nine for a lazy eye, and felt like a complete freak."

Sensitive New Age Killer, the filmmaker's 2000 release, and the third movie in the collection, remains his biggest-budgeted film to date, channelling John Woo and walking a very fine line between violent action and satire, in a surreal, brutal tale of a belligerent hitman.

Although *Defenceless* snagged the Best Picture and Best Actress awards at the 2004 Melbourne Underground Film Festival, Savage maintains that his move to LA last year was inevitable.

"My films were pretty much ignored or underappreciated in Australia," he says. "Marketing is very niche there, and it's hard for anyone who doesn't make a romantic comedy or quirky comedy — with a few exceptions like *Wolf Creek* — to get ahead. It's very conservative."

Happily, *Savage Cinema* should help the rebel Aussie director gain a foothold in North America. The set includes commentary tracks and making-of documentaries, while a fourth disc contains all three of the aforementioned Super 8 shorts, as well as *Shamed*, Savage's surprisingly low-key made-for-TV crime drama about child porn. Subversive also plans to re-release *Masked Avenger* next year. ■



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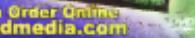
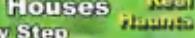
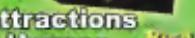
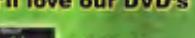
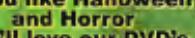
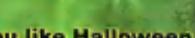


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VINTAGE HORROR REISSUES

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RESURRECTED

THE BORIS KARLOFF COLLECTION (1937-1951)
 Starring Charles Laughton, Boris Karloff, Sally Forrest, et al.
 Directed by Joseph Pevney, George Wagner and Nathan Juran, et al.
 Written by Robert Louis Stevenson, Jerry Sacksheim, Edward Locke, et al.
 Universal

Even if William Henry Pratt had taken his inevitable dirt nap in 1939, his legacy as one of the reigning icons of fantastic cinema would be secured. Pratt, better known as Boris Karloff, essayed the role of Mary Shelley's proto-zombie in both *Frankenstein*, *Bride of Frankenstein* and *Son of Frankenstein* with such screen-owning aplomb that he virtually defined a genre and a generation. However, after the success of *Son*, Karloff continued to work steadily (almost 'till the day he died) in a stream of pulp and horror B-movies, many of which were made, like the *Frankenstein* films, for Universal Pictures. Though the studio has been slowly spitting out many of those gems on DVD for years, it appears that with the new three-disc *Boris Karloff Collection*, it may have finally purged its vaults of Karloff once and for all.

But don't let the box set's tagline "The Master of Horror in his most frightening roles!" fool you. Out of the five pictures presented here, only *The Strange Door* (1951) plays out like a true horror film. What we have instead is a series of Gothic melodramas and period pieces, entertaining, dark and violent programmers that feature the genre guru, in mostly supporting roles. And though

not all deserve to be called classics, the set offers a fascinating mixed bag of vintage mayhem.

In *The Strange Door*, a Poe-esque tale of lust and revenge, Karloff portrays the sympathetic role of a servant to an evil nobleman (played by legendary ham and *Night of the Hunter* director Charles Laughton). Atmospheric and eerie, *The Strange Door* gets under your skin, though admittedly Karloff is underused.

The Black Castle (1951) again fails to properly exploit old Karloff, giving him the thankless part of a court doctor to a crackers Austrian count. *Wolf Man* man man Lon Chaney Jr. also shows up as a Golomesque brute, but overall

The Black Castle is ultimately pretty ordinary.

Karloff takes centre stage, however, in the lavishly mounted, 1944 Technicolor musical horror show *The Clowns*. In it, the thespian agam plays a sinister doctor who this time has murdered his soprano wife years earlier. When young opera ingenue Susanna Foster shows up, Doc Karloff goes off on his rocker and gets all *Phantom of the Opera* on her lovely bum. Anything but scary, *The Clowns* is still a treat for fans of vintage Hollywood horror fluff.

Also included in this set is the 1937 gangster potboiler *Night Key*, a fun but forgettable piece of pulp in which Karloff plays a kindly inventor blackmailed by a pack of toughs into helping them rob banks.

The real gem of *The Boris Karloff Collection*, though, is Rowland Lee's 1939 version of *Tower of London*, a top-notch tale of terror and intrigue that casts Basil Rathbone,



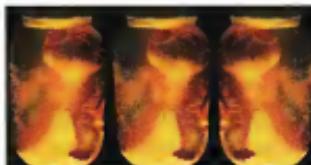
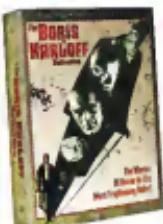
Climax

The Boris Karloff Collection: Mainly a curio for the uninitiated

Vincent Price and Karloff together a full 25 years before the Jacques Tourneur/Richard Matheson vehicle *The Comedy of Terrors*. Rathbone plays Richard III, and Price is the Duke of Clarence (he would later play Richard in the 1962 Roger Corman remake) in this surprisingly nihilistic and graphic telling of the bloody king's rise and fall. But it's Karloff who steals the show as the bald, sadistic, disfigured executioner/torturer Mord.

Though he walked a similar path to his contemporaries, John Carradine, Lon Chaney Jr. and Bela Lugosi, only the ever sober, clear-minded, ego-free Karloff made respectability throughout his long career — right up to Peter Bogdanovich's *Torquals* (RM#60). *The Boris Karloff Collection*, though light on extras and admittedly no more than a curio for the uninitiated, is virtually the last word on Karloff's golden age oeuvre on DVD.

Chris Alexander



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"THERE YOU HAVE IT, FOLKS: STANISLAVSKY AND THE BRAIN, TOGETHER AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME."

THE MAD MUSINGS OF A SCHIZOID CINEPHILE

by Chris Alexander



The Brain

In last month's *Mad Musings* I took the time to rave about a little chunk of Canuckploitation called *The Brain*, a wonderfully ridiculous 1988 movie about the many lives and loves of a giant, toothy, infatuable, mind-controlling glob of man-eating grey matter. Starring *Re-Animator*'s David Gale as the evil brain's alien front man, and sporting ample nudity, bloodshed and enough sheer weirdness for ten movies, *The Brain* is an obscure, lowbrow immi-epic of the highest order.

Now, if you recall further, I mentioned that a *Forrest Gump*-type turn of events led me to befriend and interview a man named Ken Gord, veteran producer of film and television.

sion and one of the many lost souls who helped unleash *The Brain* upon an unsuspecting (and generally indifferent) world.

This month I opted to kick my obsession up a notch. Yes, lads and ladies, I actually tracked down the Father of *The Brain*, old-school B-flick director Ed (Bloody Birthday) Hunt, all the way down in sunny Whittier, California. And whereas Gord looked back upon his *Brain* days with a bit of a blush in his cheeks, Hunt has a more sombre and serious view on this grinning, googly-eyed piece of medulla oblongata movie mayhem. Read on . . .

*Ed, in a few words, what exactly is *The Brain* about?*

Well, *The Brain* is about a number of things. It's about phony psychologists, hidden causes to bigger problems, media manipulation —

— and giant rubber brains.

True. But you know, one thing I've noticed about audiences is that they generally need big arrows to indicate if a film has "artistic" merit. As soon as they see the title and the brain himself, they short circuit, they can't allow themselves to see deeper. But I think below *The Brain's* surface there is a lot to think about.

*So, is *The Brain* a satire, then?*

No, but it definitely has satirical elements. I think I was ahead of time with the whole criticism of pop psychology.

Well, *The Brain* IS ahead of its time and certainly stands alone. As far as actors go, what was the late great David Gale like to work with?

Very professional. Gale was a very good actor and very quick to pick up exactly what I wanted from him. I had worked with Christopher Lee when I did *Starship Invaders* and both were charismatic actors that happened to be working in B-movies.

*Are you aware of the little cult that has quietly sprung up around *The Brain*?*

I'm somewhat aware. There's a public access channel in Whittier that showed *The Brain* several times recently and people went nuts.

*So... are you proud of *The Brain*, Ed?*

Yes, absolutely. I mean, I wish it had a bigger budget, I wish it went further and I wish I had understood horror better back then, like I do now. But for what it is, I think it's very good and I have yet to see another low-budget exploitation film better than *The Brain*. And it's certainly not boring. The human element sells it, I think. I always use [celebrated acting coach] Constantin Stanislavsky's "Magic If" in my films — if the characters feel natural, no matter how absurd the situation, then I'm happy.

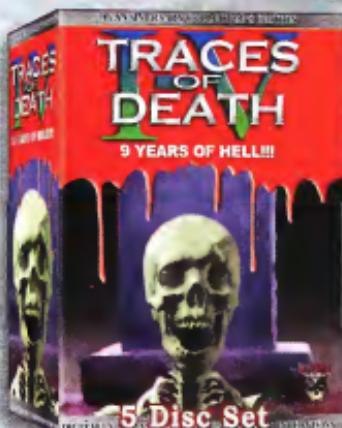
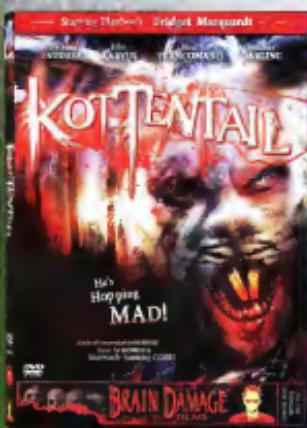
So there you have it, folks. Stanislavsky and *The Brain*, together again for the first time. If that bit of cosmic madness alone doesn't make you want to comb the planet looking for a copy of the long out-of-print VHS release of the film, then certainly nothing will. And so, your Schizoid Cinephile heretofore closes the books on yet another unsung horror gem. I promise that next month will be business as usual — 100 percent Brain-less. But before we adjourn... gimme a B, gimme a R, gimme an A-I-N! What's that spell? BRAIN! Yyyyy! Alexander out. *



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IN THIS ISSUE

ULTIMATE FANTASTIC FOUR #21, 2005

by Mark Millar and Greg Land (Marvel)

THE SANDMAN, HOUSE AD, 1988

by Neil Gaiman and Sean Phillips (DC/Vertigo)

BATMAN & THE MONSTER MEN

by Matt Wagner (DC)

THE CLOBBER'S MONSTER

by Jeff Amodeo and Craig Newland (Image)

HELLCITY #1 OF 3

by Macco Blair and Joe Flood (Gigantic)

IMPALER #1

by William Harris and Nick Pomicino (Image)

ZOMBEE

by Miles Gunter and Motor Smiles (Image)

For this Halloween issue, a retro-focused column that celebrates the spirit of the event by having a bit of facile fun with a cadre of costumed critters. A good trick deserves a treat. Allowing that it's a treat for comic creators when their work becomes monstrously successful, here are two superb tricks from the darker corners of comicdom, whose resonance continues.

In *Ultimate Fantastic Four* #21 (see *RM#51*), a horrid comic dressed in southern clothing, a zombie version of Reed Richards dupe his "Ultimate" counterpart into opening the door between their dimensions. "Ever get the feeling you've been had?" he quips. The implications of this trick were larger than that of mere genocide, ushering in what can only be called the "zombie age" of Marvel Comics.

Published in July 2005, *UFF* #21 had been in the works since late 2004, and the internet comic community had been abuzz in the months leading up. Marvel's *Ultimate* line of titles, launched in 2001, had rebooted classic characters like the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man and The Avengers in an alternate universe that was more approachable for neophyte readers. But the advance word was that *UFF* #21 would lead off a three-part story called *Crossover* in which the Ultimate Four would actually meet their Fantastic counterparts (minus, not exactly). Marvel's spring 2005 press release did little to dispel the fans' willing misdirection: "[FF leader] Reed Richards has used his scientific genius to contact an Earth in a surprisingly familiar parallel dimension – and he's ready to visit!" As we now know, non-*Ultimate* Reed turned out to be far less Alpha than Omega – a zombie! – and writer Mark Millar masterfully maintained the ruse to the last possible moment, literally the final page of *UFF* #21 (pictured).

Before *Crossover* even hit the stands, a sequel was in the works: the now legendary

Marvel *Zombies* miniseries by Robert Kirkman and Sean Phillips, whose title is yet another trick-an-ironic take on the derogatory term levelled at '90s fans known for buying anything the publisher released, quality being an option. Recently, Millar brought back the zombie doppelgängers, now called *Frightful Four* in *UFF* #30-32, and with Kirkman's own hints that there's still meat on the bone (see *RM#53*), there's little doubt that we've seen the last of these Marvel-ous monsters.

Better still, artist Arthur Suydam's breakthrough trend of zombie-

ing iconic comic book covers – he did a whopping fifteen of them, all collected in the *Marvel Zombies* HC – continues in the new *Son of Satan* miniseries, whose gone-to-hell covers are horror homages to famous works of art (November issue's cover pictured).

Finally, back to the summer of 1988 and the DC house ad for then-looming series *The Sandman* (pictured). This marketing humdinger misquotes T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* ("I will show you fear in a handful of dust") – here's hoping it was a copyright issue as opposed to one involving lack of research. But the real trick here was its purposeful plays on comic fandom's misguided expectations, again to great effect. In this case, pre-Vertigo



"Getting had" by the Zombie Fantastic Four means getting had... for dinner, (left) The Son of Satan goes (American) Gothic, and (below) Neil Gaiman's Morpheus promises all dreamers their just desserts.

era comic readers see an ad for a brand-new book with a less-than-famous figurehead who "controls your dreams" and promises "terror" – clearly, they think, it's another EC-style hoeran anthology with a gaudy host.

The comic was no anthology and we quickly learned that, as howts go, Morpheus was anything but a good one (and being horrible,

of course, made for terrific reading). *The Sandman* is now a recognized comic benchmark that, along with Dave Sim's *Cerebus*, redefined the possibilities of "big picture" storytelling; it also helped create the Vertigo imprint, and became the first and only comic to win a World Fantasy Award (issue #19, 1991) and the first graphic novel to enter the New York Times bestseller list in the week of its release (*Endless Nights*, 2003).



QUICK CUTS

Genetic manipulation gone awry has long been a staple of pulp comics, from the tragic accident resulting in Lee/Kirby's Thing (*Fantastic Four*) to the brazen scientific abuse that yielded

Wein/Wrightson's *Un-Men* (*Swamp Thing*). Two recent horror-influenced comics examine this concept from interesting perspectives, albeit flawed ones. Just collected in a trade edition, *Batman & The Munster Men* is a fairly strong "year one" story presenting the Dark Knight's first

encounter with science villain Hugo Strange. Matt Wagner's art is, as always, top-notch — he might actually be my favorite *Batman* cover artist. Disappointing, then, to find Strange's titular mutants less than threatening in their appearance, though Wagner's skillful choreography makes for superb action (issue six's bolo-and-ratchet simultaneous takedown of two of the monster men is definitive Batman). More disappointing to see Strange use the hero's own DNA to make a next-gen mutant, but then have that monster manifest little to none of the Batman's physical prowess. What a waste of a clever idea.

Speaking of clever ideas, the title of this summer's *The Cabby's Monster* – the other genes-gone-wacky title – was interesting enough, but the subtitle was mind-blowing: "A Tale of Gepetto's Frankenstein" Pinocchio becomes the Frankenstein monster – brilliant. Alas, the story itself skirts



its own mandate, dubiously preserving only the former's character name of Geppetto and its father/son theme. Moreover, instead of puppeteering coupled with upon-a-star wishing, it uses the invocation of a Golem as the means of bringing the monster to life. Don't get me wrong, Golem becomes

Frankenstein is another nifty idea, it's just not the one we were promised. Having the cover look that compelling doesn't help matters, either!

If you haven't yet checked out *Running in Devilville* (RMN39) by Gigantic Graphic Novels, then you're missing one of the best horror-comedy comics ever. Gigantic's *Intest*, *Hellcity*, isn't no *Devilville*, but it still goes to, ahem, town. It seems that Hell is an actual city — a humorous, noir locale at that. Follow reluctant P.I. Bill Tankersly as he shadows Lucifer himself to find out what's making the boss behave so out of character (but there's more than one name fate involved, and naming one of them Mary D'Meter is a nice touch). As the saying goes, the Devil is in the details, so keep your eyes peeled because half the fun in this book is the small stuff, such as the homeless demon land-mining the sidewalk with feces, lemon juice as a tracking device and the stolen "Ted Bundy + 1" party invitation.

Vampires have become such old hat in honor that their ability to outright menace has been all but cauterized. *Imperior* deftly restores the bloodsuckers — and their figure-head, Vlad Dracula — to absolutely epic creatures-of-the-night status. Shadows literally come to life in this outstanding debut, which masterfully deploys 2-D (shadows on the wall) and 3-D (a vampire emerging from those shadows) *within the same cover*. I'm



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ANSWER

going to hedge my bets here and predict that artist Nick Postic will be my year-end choice for best horror comic artist. As to the plot: how does a blizzard of almost Biblical proportions crippling New York City on the eve of a derelict Wallachian freighter's arrival grab you? Buy this book, or I'll cancel your *Rue Morgue* subscription!



Three reasons

that *Zombie* is not a typical living dead comic: A) it's set in feudal Japan and features a samurai and a gangster (essentially, a renegade samurai) forced to team up to stop an apocalypse that's walkin', talkin' and outright kickboxin', B) it has a seven-page sequence where the duo fights a flock of zombie birds, C) the art's kinda like *Magnolia* meets *Oemming* (kinda). Also, you gotta love this exchange: "You've changed. What's different?" "I've eaten all the flesh off my face." More info: www.zombiecomic.com



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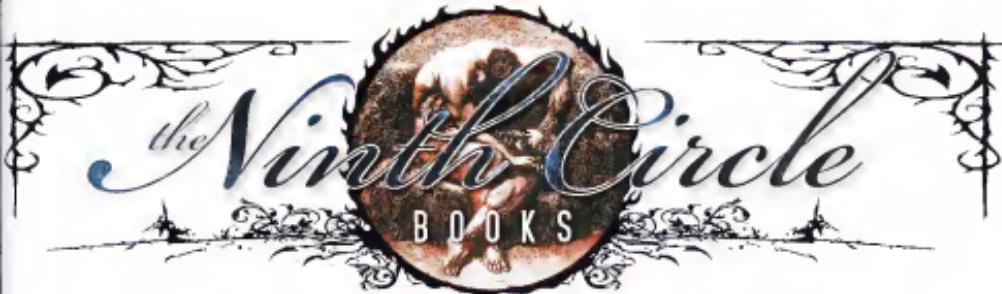
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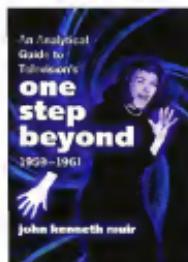
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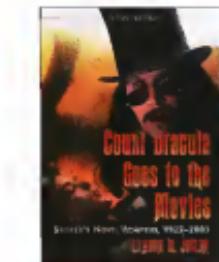


AN ANALYTICAL GUIDE TO TELEVISION'S ONE STEP BEYOND

John Kenneth Muir
McFarland

When I was but a lad, I developed an unhealthy, relentless obsession with late-night TV reruns of the *Twilight Zone*. One Friday night as I lay on the couch watching my weekly dose of Rod Serling's untouched, bar-raising dark fantasy show, I nodded off, only to wake some hours later to something else. It looked like the Zone, it sounded like the Zone, but it was something weird: an even darker example of pre-'60s television. Writer John Kenneth Muir must have had a similar experience because he has written the definitive document of this dark, scary series, accurately entitled *An Analytical Guide to Television's One Step Beyond*.

Creator/director John Newland's short-lived but influential nightmare anthology show *One Step Beyond* (RM#35) is rumoured to have been spurred into existence by Zone's success. According to Muir, however, Newland's similar and similarly star-studded (Bill Shatner, Warren Beatty and *TZ* contributor Charles Beaumont all appeared at some point) anthology show came first. Hosted by Newland, each week's



episode would see a different stark morality tale unfold in the form of EC Comics-styled stories of human evil rewarded by cosmic comeuppance and killer karma. Though not as elegant and cinematic as Serling's near-perfect experiments, and lacking the *TZ* twist endings, *OSB* had the weight of being based on supposed true accounts of the paranormal and supernatural. Presented as fact, Newland's efforts may have more in common with later television entries like *Unsolved Mysteries*, but *OSB* remains absolutely terrifying in its presentation.

Muir has done genre TV fans a great service in penning this fine book. While he isn't the most charismatic of scribes (the intro is more or less a random list of TV shows that *OSB* has influenced coupled with dull point-by-point facts), he has indeed gone above and, uh, beyond by slavishly analyzing and critiquing each and every episode of the series. He also gets to the guts of Newland's later kick at the esthode can, the ill-fated late-'70s redux *The Next Step Beyond*.

The original series (running from 1959-61) remains a scary, occasionally brilliant example of television as an art form (see the episode The Clown for maximum goosebumps) and Muir's guide is a fine love letter to its retro creepshow charms.

Chris Alexander



COUNT DRACULA GOES TO THE MOVIES: STOKER'S NOVEL ADAPTED, 1922-2003

Lyndon W. Joslin
McFarland

If you love Dracula — not the myth, not the breakfast cereal, but the actual character created by Bram Stoker — this lovely hardcover book is an indispensable guide to his film career. As Lyndon W. Joslin points out in his introduction, Dracula is possibly the most filmed character of all time, but only a fraction of vampire movies (even some with "Draculas" in their titles) stay faithful to the Count from the original novel. His book thus aims to collect and critique only those films which retain the "gist" of Dracula's spirit.

From 1922's *Nosferatu* to Guy Maddin's 2003 ballet *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin's Diary*, Joslin examines fifteen films for their allegiance to Stoker's storyline. As it turns out, some of the most well-known adaptations, such as the 1931 classic starring Bela Lugosi, veer as far from the original story as a vamp from garbe. Through detailed synopsis and analysis, Joslin calls out filmmakers for turning Dracula from Stoker's old man with cruel, sharp teeth and pointed ears into a svelte romantic, as well as for their

The Grim Reader

HALLOWEEN PROPMAKER'S HANDBOOK

Kenneth Pleak

McFarland

Wanna be that house on your block at Halloween? If so, use this handy guide to building everything from two-way mirrors to partially eaten hands, using store-bought items and household ingredients. The amateur writing and abundance of gory skull props (bonehead farewells = lame) are made up for by practical instructions and helpful illustrations.

HALLOWEEN PROPMAKER'S HANDBOOK



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Deva Alexander

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Joseph Nassise

Tales Publishing

Joseph Nassise's latest novella gets off to a promising start after a young girl develops a mysterious fatal disease. As her desperate father looks beyond science for a cure, he discovers a ritual that requires him to feed the organs of seven people to his ailing child. While the latter half of the tale becomes painfully predictable, the final twist will undoubtedly raise eyebrows.

Shannon Henner



FUN SPOOKED HERE: WORD PLAY FOR HALLOWEEN

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Q: What's a ghost's favorite religion? A: Boo-dism. If you laughed at that, you may enjoy this tiny book of spooky puns about vampires, ghouls, zombies and more. It's clever and cute, and may be fun for young 'uns, but it's mostly made for impulse counter buys. Save your pennies for Halloween candy instead.

Uliss Ladeuceur



Count Dracula Goes to the Movies: An indispensable guide to films in the Stoker tradition

incongruous twists involving Renfield, Lucy and Mina. On the flipside, he directs your attention to even the timest bits of the book resurrected in various films.

The depth of research here is impressive. Each entry (including some rare foreign and televised versions) comes complete with details on cast, music and release formats, plus good photographs. And for all the information, it's a very pleasant read, with Joslin's personality (and biases) coming through. He slays Coppola's "overweight, overblown" 1992 re-imagining of *Dracula* as a love story, particularly the director's claims that it was always Stoker's intention. He praises 1958's *Horror of Dracula* as a "ripping good horror film" that perfectly distills the book. And lest anyone accuse him of overlooking important *Dracula* films that stray from Stoker, included are two special chapters on the Universal and Hammer series.

Count Dracula Goes to the Movies (in this second, updated edition) is perfect, really. At over \$50 retail, it will take a bite out of your budget, making it a fangtastic gift for the undead lover in your life.

Uliss Ladeuceur

MAMMOTH BOOK OF HAUNTED HOUSE STORIES

Peter Haining, ed.

Carroll & Graf

Dusty mansions with hidden rooms. Slithering, sucking sounds outside bedroom

doors. Windows blown open on still nights. Closets that eat children. There are so many creepy locations in this collection, the 700 pages practically creak when you turn them.

British editor Peter Haining has not only written much on the supernatural, but allegedly lives in a haunted house himself, so it's a shame his short foreword doesn't delve into the specifics of the subjective, or explain his anthology's bent towards century-old narratives. I guess that's another book.

Nevertheless, there are 42 great ghost stories here, starting with *The Haunted And The Hauntings* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, purportedly based on true accounts and considered the granddaddy of man-alone-in-abandoned-house-with-mysterious-forces tales. Next, Ralph Adams Cram takes us to Paris for *No. 252 M. Le Prince*, an equally unsettling romp through a house known as "La Bouche D'Enfer" that can be evidenced in evocative passages such as "My body was like lead, my tongue was paralyzed, I could hardly move my eyes. And the light was going out."

Dozens of similarly themed stories follow, riding a familiar template: oddball visitor rents a room/house long abandoned by locals, visitor encounters spirits, visitor leaves, sometimes understanding what happened, sometimes not. These are divided into chapters on avenging spirits, restless ghosts, sex and the supernatural, children, and psychic phenomenon, but all read much the same.

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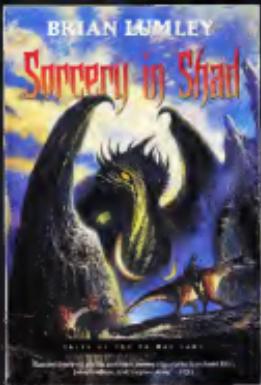
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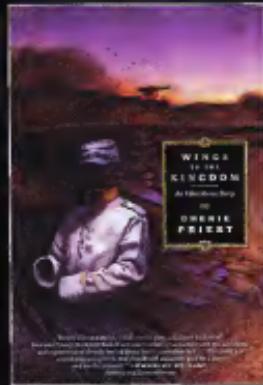


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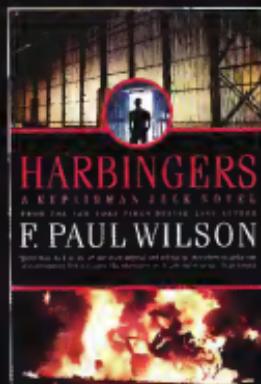
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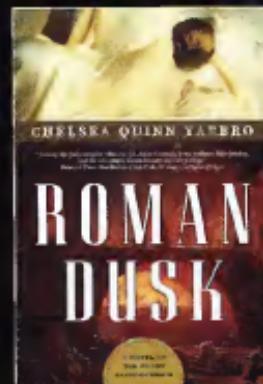


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cowboys for christ

Robin Hardy

Luath Press

Robin Hardy is angry with Hollywood. They've remade his 1973 cult classic, *The Wicker Man*, and have cast Nicolas Cage in the lead (see p. 64 for review). Hardy's outrage is understandable. After all, how easy will it be for the writer/director to secure funds for his own *Wicker Man*-style film, *Cowboys For Christ*, now that the remake's out? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that *Cowboys For Christ* is not a *Wicker Man* carbon copy, but inhabits the same strange world.

Some history first: Hardy has been talking about a follow-up to the *Wicker Man*, provisionally entitled *The Riding of the Læstads*, for years. Rumour had Christopher Lee and Vanessa Redgrave starring. Then Warner Bros. greenlit the Americanized *Wicker Man* remake. Meanwhile, Hardy has come up with *Cowboys For Christ*, the somewhat problematic book upon which his proposed film will be based.

Beth and Steve are young virginal Americans – she's a Britney Spears-style

COWBOYS FOR CHRIST

ROBIN HARDY

team pop star-turned-gospel singer, and he's her simple cowboy fiancé – who come to Scotland to spread the word of the Lord. Agents of the world outside America, they must fight great resistance to their "message." But in Sir Lachlan, Lord of Tressock Castle, they find an ally. Little do they know, though, that the town of Tressock is a community that has forsaken organized religion in favour of pagan worship and human sacrifice.

Some of Hardy's ideas are interesting. The whole "ignorant, repressed Americans vs. sexually liberated European pagans" theme modernizes *The Wicker Man*, outraged Sgt. Howie's character. But Hardy paints his foreign characters in very broad strokes. Beth is a dumb American who approaches her unengineering Scottish charges with both sympathy and pity – so much so that (SPOILER!) her death is almost applauded – and Steve's "gosh shucks" cowboy schtick is equally unconvincing, like Lars von Trier's films about America when we know he's never stepped foot on American soil.

Wicker Man fans will appreciate Hardy's work somewhat, fact as it is with elements of the erotic, romantic, comédé and horrific. The rest of you will likely want to wait until the movie comes out. If it ever does.

Sean Plummer

It's more interesting to see where modern writers have taken the haunted house tale: closer to horror than mere Victorian thrills. Robert (*Psycho*) Bloch's *House Of The Hatchet* brings a young couple to a cheap roadside attraction, and is as much about crumbling relationships as rotting floorboards. Similarly reworking the genre, Ian Watson's 1990 story *Happy Hour*, though set in an Elizabethan English pub, is a thoroughly fresh succubus tale.

This updated paperback version also includes a new chapter of entries selected by horror icons, and Stephen King's *The Boogeyman* (chosen by Robert Englund), closes the volume on a particularly nasty note.

Here's hoping Haiming's next anthology focuses on 21st-century haunted houses – surely, nothing is scarier than suburban sprawl.

Liisa Ladouceur

slither

Edward Lee

Necro Publications



Just when you think you know Ed Lee, he'll surprise you. As is the case with *Slither*, his latest novel-length offering – wholly unrelated to the recent film of the same name. Here Lee takes his usual sex and violence formula and dispenses much of the expected gratuitousness in favour of B-movie-style creepy crawlies gross-outs, interpersonal angst, and wild conspiracy theories. If that isn't enough to intrigue you, how about the addition of deadly, genetically engineered parasitic worms? They're creatures that can not only invade via sexual intercourse, but they have been meticulously designed to be drawn to the heat and pheromones released during sex itself?

The central plot follows two scientists, a buxom *National Geographic* photographer and their military escort as they travel to a decommissioned base on a long-deserted island to observe and photograph a rare species of underwater worm. Only they get a lot more worms than they bargained for when they discover an "impossible" ultra-aggressive new species and several human corpses proving its virility. With communications to the outside world mysteriously scrambled and an ever-growing sense of dread and desperation, the quartet must solve the mystery of the deadly worms before they become incubators themselves.

With *Slither*, Lee has successfully woven a tight, page-turning tale of hellish (not to mention well-researched) scientific horror. His characters, despite treading quite liberally on the stereotypical side, are mostly endearing. But it is not the characters that ultimately draw you in and keep you glued to the page, it's the worms, gross, physically devastating and seemingly unstoppable. Never mind that just when you think you've finally got it all figured out, Lee's tale swings so violently into left field, you'll be left dazed, reeling and not quite sure what to make of any of it.

A good pulpy horror novel should be like a roller coaster: full of unexpected thrills and surprises. *Slither* is just that... with tons and tons of orifice-invading worms wiggling in the seat next to you.

Monica S. Kuebler

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From Lovecraftian fiction to serial killer thrillers to quiet ghost stories, Britain's RAMSEY CAMPBELL has defined himself as a bona fide horror fiction renaissance man. Join us for a look back at Campbell's 44-year tenure in the genre.

THE DARK PRINCE OF BRIT LIT

by RICHARD GAVIN

He's written nearly 50 books, won more awards than he has fingers, and was deemed "Britain's most respected living horror writer" by *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Though he's a monument in dark fiction, Ramsey Campbell has never had the mass-market draw of Stephen King, however. Perhaps this is because Campbell's body of work creates chills and suspense by employing abstract literary devices – his stories more often than not become distorted mirrors into which the characters view themselves – and highly contemporary settings with believable character relationships. With his varied excursions into horror's many subgenres and careful attention to the craft of writing, it's no wonder he's also frequently referred to as the horror author that horror authors read.

Campbell was born in 1946 in Liverpool, England, and found himself drawn to the macabre from the time he learned to read.

"It seems to me that back in 1953 my mind was already bent on improving on the terrors I encountered and rendering them even more grotesque," confesses Campbell.

His first attempt at a book of his own was a pen-written, crayon-illustrated manuscript entitled *Ghostly Tales*, drafted at just eleven years old. Shortly thereafter, he made another influential discovery in H.P. Lovecraft. After devouring *Cry Horror* – a hefty British primer of Lovecraft's works – in a single day, he immediately set about imitating the master. At the suggestion of a friend, the then fourteen-year-old sent his Lovecraft-inspired stories to August Derleth, co-founder of the legendary Arkham House publishing compe-

ny who anthologized Campbell's "The Church in High Street" in 1962, alongside genre giants like Robert Bloch and H.R. Wakefield.

"Crucially, [Derleth] showed me how to rewrite very early in my career and – at least as important – to enjoy rewriting," says Campbell of his early mentor, who also provided the young scribe with a detailed list of editorial suggestions.

Two years later, Derleth released Campbell's first collection of Lovecraftian tales, *The Inhabitant of the Lake*. But by this time the author was already moving beyond tentacled terrors into more personal stories that drew upon his own fears and life experiences, which included growing up with a mentally ill mother.

"I had to learn at a very early age – three years old, to be precise – to distinguish between what my mother perceived and what was objectively real," says Campbell. "I grew adept at that, but less able to objectify my father, who lived in the house, but, because my parents were estranged, was almost never seen. He was the presence beyond the door, the footstep in the night. No wonder I've written any number of tales about the father as monster."

If Campbell's home life influenced the familial themes common throughout his works, then it was the moral rigors of a Catholic education that fed his fascination with writing about childhood horrors (i.e. *The Influence*, about a malevolent crane who enforces her power over her granddaughter even after death).

"[My schooling] put me off God – though perhaps it's time I stopped using it as an excuse – and must have added to my preoccupation with the vulnerability of children," Campbell admits.

Ramsey Campbell
The Face That Must Die
introduction by Frazee & Gavin



"Would I have written horror without my childhood? Perhaps – I've always loved the field – but the themes might have been different."

By the time his second collection, *Demons by Daylight*, was unleashed in 1973, Campbell's distinct narrative voice had emerged. He now drew inspiration from mainstream writers like Graham Greene and Vladimir Nabokov, whose emphasis on how a story's effect is achieved through meticulous word selection more than anything else, echoed throughout Campbell's work. Stories such as *The Scar*, which hit upon his recurring

"[MY SCHOOLING] PUT ME OFF GOD... AND MUST HAVE ADDED TO MY PREOCCUPATION WITH THE VULNERABILITY OF CHILDREN."

RAMSEY CAMPBELL

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father-as-monster theme, and the award-winning *Mackintosh Willy* where a group of boys encounter the source of a grim urban legend in the sewers, added to the author's reputation as a master of modern horror.

After over a decade penning short fiction, Campbell broadened his creative latitude by back-lining his first novel: *The Doll Who Ate His Mother* (1976); about a modern cannibal believed to have scavenged a meal from a car wreck.

"The more short stories I wrote, the more daunting the task of a novel seemed," Campbell says. "But I think the apprenticeship served me well." The British Fantasy Society agreed, for it nominated this debut novel as well as three of Campbell's short stories for that year's BFS Awards ballot.

After the publication of *Doll*, Campbell was offered the opportunity to pen three novels based on the classic Universal Monster films: *The Bride of Frankenstein*, *The Wolfman* and *Dracula's Daughter*. In a surprising move, he agreed, but adopted various pseudonyms for the task.

"I saw no reason – and still don't – why a novel based on a film shouldn't be done with as much care as the film based on the script, and so I was happy to celebrate those films and maybe even provide a little insight into their underlying themes," he explains.

During this same period, Campbell added the title of editor to his resume by helming a string of successful anthologies, including *Superhorror* (1976), before returning in 1979 with his second and most controversial novel, *The Face That Must Die*. The book provides an unflinching study of John Horridge, a razor-wielding, paranoid serial killer who stalks the bleak streets of Thatcher-era England. Though heavily edited upon its initial publication due to its graphic brutality, an unexpunged version is now available from Millipede Press (RM25).

In the aftermath of *The Face That Must Die* some readers feared that the writer who once championed the suggestiveness and reticence of early masters like M.R. James had opted to slum with the emerging splatterpunks, but throughout the '80s Campbell would prove that he was equally at home with the gory and the ghostly. By this phase in his career he had uncovered a new fountainhead of fears.

"From *The Nameless* [1981] onward, fears for [my] children surface. Not the least of those is the revived fear of the parent becoming monstrous, but by then the parent was me," says Campbell.

Even when the horror lit boom of the 1980s ebbed and publishers across the board dropped their horror imprints, Campbell remained undaunted, turning his attention from the darkness around us to the darkness within, releasing psychological novels such as *The One Safe Place* (1995), *The House on Nazareth Hill* (1996) and *The Last Voice They Hear* (1998). While these books were taut with suspense and peppered with grisly plot twists, there was not a spectre or a walking cadaver to be found. It seemed that Campbell sensed publishing trends and moved into the realm of thrillers, though the author insists that even his non-supernatural works enable him to explore his favourite recurring

theme: the nature of good and evil.

Still, never one to be pigeonholed, Campbell welcomed the new millennium with *The Darkest Part of the Woods* (2002), an unabashed and much-lauded return to the Lovecraftian terrors of the doomed Severn Valley, a locale the author first conjured some 40 years prior in his inaugural collection. Campbell was once again striving to subdue the sense of awe he so admired in *The Weird Tales* catalog.

This era also brought the author's nightmares to the silver screen for the first time with *Los Sin Nombre*, director Jaume Balagueró's take on Campbell's novel *The Nameless* (see p.32, for review), about a long-missing child and a sinister cult.

"I especially like *Los Sin Nombre*," says Campbell. "The changes are radical – setting it in Spain and deleting all the supernatural elements – but I was very impressed by the sense of dread and the use of actual locations. I've long felt that it's better to have a good film that departs from the adapted text rather than a dull one that's excessively faithful, and this [film] confirms my feelings."

Like many genre writers, the recognition and critical acclaim Campbell has garnered has not come with attendant wealth. So when the author found himself working for a short stint at a Borders bookstore to supplement his writing income, he used the experience to inform *The Overnight* (2004), a novel about a haunted bookstore, and most recently the non-supernatural, *Secret Story*, about a horror writer who draws upon life (or should we say death) as inspiration for his bloody yarns. Thrilling and gruesome, the book turns an eye inward to the exploitation of crime and human tragedy that occurs within the entertainment industry.

Even after over four decades of service to the genre, Campbell isn't ready to retire. With two new novels on the horizon – *The Girl of the Dark* ("about a silent comedian forgotten by film history for reasons that are older and darker than the cinema") and the just announced *Thieving Fear* – Campbell continues to live up to his title as Britain's most respected, if not prolific, living horror writer.

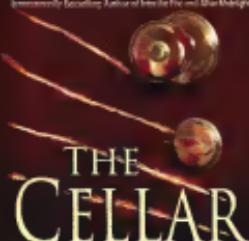
For more information on Ramsey Campbell and his upcoming works, visit ramseycampbell.com.

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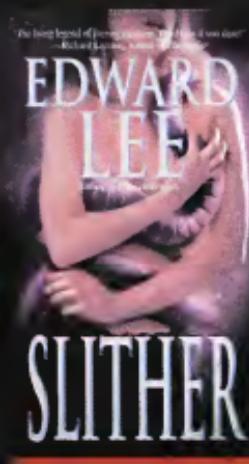
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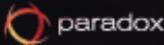
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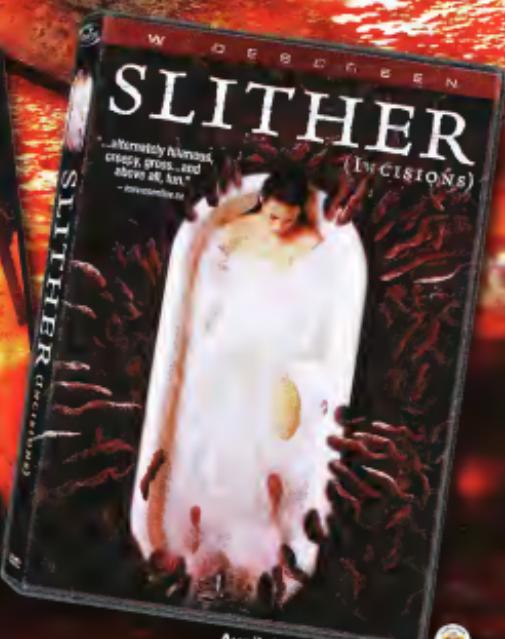
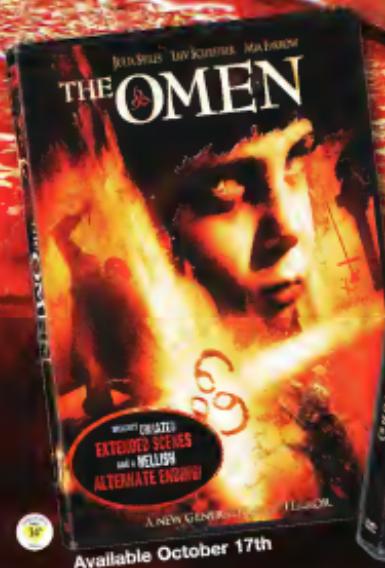
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WARNING! TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR

EREBUS HAUNTED ATTRACTION
PONTIAC, MICHIGAN

by Jivanka Vuckovic

Tired of the same old uninspired ghosts-'n'-ghouls Halloween haunted houses that max out their creativity quotient with cackling spectre animatronics and a dude running around in a hockey mask? If so, seek out Erebus, certified by the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the World's Largest Walk-Through Haunted Attraction.

Located in a massive brick building in the heart of Pontiac, Michigan, Erebus boasts a whopping four stories of spooky interactive mayhem, hosted by 60-plus prop-wielding actors in full Hollywood-quality makeup and costumes. This one's for adults only - no goofy, wax museum-style kiddie stuff here, only highly conceptual horror attractions with computer-controlled effects, lights, sounds and fog, all designed to scare the wazoo piss out of you.

True to the promise on their business cards, creators Ed and Jim Teribus "show no mercy" as you're menaced by monsters, buried alive, submerged in a virtual swamp and terrorized beyond the expectations of a standard haunt. In 1999, after operating portable haunts for twenty years (notably the trailer-based Haunted Gallery), the Teribus brothers found a permanent home for their unique haunted house at 18 Water Street and renamed it after the primordial Greek god Erebus, who was considered the personification of darkness (and also fortuitously rhymes with the creators' last name).

Each year, tens of thousands of would-be victims line up outside the

building, where they're entertained by a giant spider puppet that swoops down threatening to snatch them up, a huge demon with glowing eyes backed by hellish flames and various actors planted along the street. Wait times can be lengthy, but well worth it, because once inside, you're in for 45 minutes of terror at the hands of these creative boogymen.

Visitors are first ushered up a flight of dark stairs to the mouth of the attraction, where they're warned there's no turning back. The show begins as you enter the first of over 30 themed rooms. Here, the back story of the entire edifice is introduced by a mad scientist stationed in a time machine (created by legendary haunt builder John Burton). Attendees act as guinea pigs who travel through the many dimensions/time periods accessed by the device. When the lights go down, a disgusting, gargantuan bug-like creature (one of the many monsters created by the in-house FX team) shoots out from behind a video screen. Suddenly, something is tickling your head, people (more often men, according to Ed Teribus) are hitting the floor, lights are flashing, smoke fills the room...and the screaming starts.

The crowd is then separated into groups that pass through one of six "decontamination chambers" into a neutral zone with a screen that counts down a timelock process. A door opens and you enter into your first time period: a series of rooms and hallways that boast real torture devices, a demented dirty clown room, a filthy kitchen with bizarre cakes, H.G. Lewis-inspired body part cuisine, and an even dirtier toilet that blows up and showers you with seemingly putrid water. Wet

and worried, you enter the "craniac pressure test room", where, through the use of electronic technology, spooky stagecraft and trained character actors, you'll witness someone having his head bashed in by a massive mallet. Whoopie!

The zone that follows is an *Indiana Jones*-inspired time period. The first scare you'll encounter here is a massive animatronic monster strapped to a wall, trying desperately to escape. And wouldn't you know it - its head does and barrels straight for you. Screams deafen as strangers huddle together until, finally, a door opens and the group runs frantically out of the enclosure only to find themselves in another room with a sinister vampire who is, natch, out for blood.

One of the best optical illusions at Erebus is a hallway which appears to have a twenty-foot drop on one side. If you hover your foot over the edge, you'll notice there is indeed a drop, which forces you back to the wall out of fear of falling. As you cling to the wall, without warning, it tips forward pneumatically, physically pushing you toward the black chasm. Everyone crouches and tries to make it through as quickly as possible before their fear of falling gives way to sheer panic.

Claustrophobia is the next anxiety the Teribus brothers exploit, as you immediately arrive in the "crushing walls" area. Giant foam walls open and close ahead, cutting you off from the rest of the group. Move slowly and they will pin you in place until they decide to let go and allow you to access the mausoleum, which is outfitted with a seemingly endless ceiling of glowing skeletons.

The next room is for arachnophobes. Blanketed in thick white webs that stick to your face as you pass is a cage that a humongous spider pounces on, pincers snapping and legs skittering. The entire pen shakes as the bug shrieks and tries to claw through to the meaty monstrosities inside.

After sloughing off the heebie jeebies, another set of stairs presents itself and you make your way up to the third floor where there's an elevator. Step inside, the doors close and the cab con-

EREBUS

HAUNTED EDIFICE

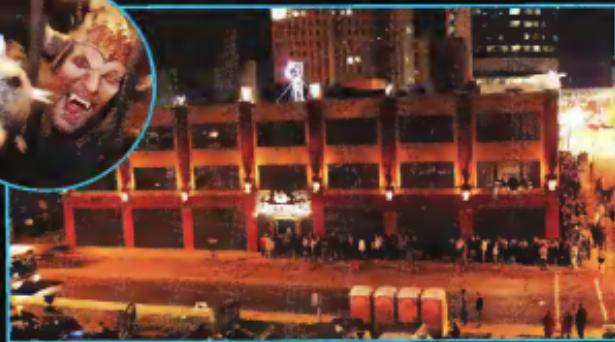
vulses – “capitalizing on the common fear of A) being trapped in an elevator and B) being trapped in an elevator that’s about to plummet to the bottom of its shaft. When the doors open, visitors pile out into the basement.

Typically, in any haunted attraction, those most easily frightened stay furthest from the action. The basement takes advantage of those poor souls by focusing their attention on a group of zombies in a cage. Without spoiling the fun, we’ll just say that visitors hiding near the back of the room are in for a very special scare here.

As you travel deeper, the floor gets steeper, the walls become narrower, the ceiling becomes shorter until the point where it seems as though you’re almost crawling through a cave. Riting, because the cave leads to a murky, tangled swamp. A new attraction for this year, the bog is an extreme sensory experience. Since the Teribus brothers cannot actually submerge visitors in water in the bowels of the building, they’ve devised a creative alternative.

The floor is covered in thick foam, which you can’t see, but gives the sensation of negotiating the muddy quagmire of a dense swamp. The walls are outfitted with giant airbags that fit up and close in on you from both sides, which genuinely feels the same way as trying to run through water does. If you try to push the airbags away, the air becomes displaced and someone behind you gets aggressively moved about in your wake. With several panicked people going through at the same time, it’s chaotic and claustrophobic as hell, especially when the “water level” goes several feet above your head! At the same time, animatronic sea creatures pop up and gnash at your legs.

After you exit the swamp, you move toward a giant, functioning Testa coil, which generates a million and a half volts of electricity. The room lights up with a multitude of sparking, charged tendrils that shoot up to thirteen and a half feet. With the buzzing of the coil still fresh in your bones, it’s time to face another acrophobic (fear of heights) test, which is followed by more tunnels, more crouching, more shrieks of terror, goosebumps and shock until you reach the most challenging part of the attraction: a hallway in which you become trapped, then buried alive.



The World's Largest Haunted Attraction: The best multimedia sensory experience, tailor-made for Halloween.

Ten thousand balls drop down, filling the room from floor to ceiling. It's absolutely terrifying to be immobilized in the dark, to not even be able to reach out for help. But just as panic sets in, trap doors open and allow the balls to drain. This is the room where people go into shock more than any other.

But that's not all! Before you leave Erebus, you'll have to confront a giant dinosaur that wraps its toothy maw around you and tries to drag you into its cave, a mutant gorilla with similar intentions, plus a thirteen-foot lion, and more.

It's an all-out assault and hands down the most fun you could possibly have being scared. Check out what what Gunner (the original "Leatherface") Hansen calls "an unequalled, masterpiece of horror" this Halloween season, and wear your glow-in-the-dark Rue Morgue tee, it may just save your life!

Erebus runs from Friday September 22 through October 31. Admission is \$19USD per person. Visit hauntedpomfret.com for complete dates, times and to purchase tickets. ■

An advertisement for www.blackcemetary.net. The background is dark and gothic, featuring a skull and the text "gothic*horror*graveyard* photography". The website address is prominently displayed at the bottom.An advertisement for the movie "Vampire Dentist: Cleavage & Legs! 40 VICTIMS!". The title is in large, stylized letters. Below it, it says "8+ CAMPY VAMPIRE FEATURE". The website www.womenwhowexcel.com/cjprod.php is listed at the bottom. The image features a vampire bat.

DINNER'S READY!

THE GORE-MET

This Issue: The Gore-met proclaims *Bone Sickness* the goriest zombie film ever made.



Bone Sickness

With their impressive self-produced debut feature *At Dawn They Sleep* (2000), indie filmmakers Brian Paulin and Rich George, under the banner Morbid Vision Films, put paid to the adage "If you want something done right, do it yourself." They control all aspects of their work – writing, directing, editing, scoring and stunting as well as providing all the effects and stunts – making uncompromising gore films on their own terms. That dedication to craft attracted the attention of Unearthed Films, distributors of some of the most notorious movies ever made (the *Graver Pig* films, *Aftermath*), with the end result being an even more ferocious version of *Bone Sickness*, inarguably the most ambitious, outrageous and downright disgusting low-budget zombie film ever, one so freakin' over-the-top it laps itself and goes over-the-top again!

Alex (George) is dying of a bone disease conventional medicine is unable to arrest. His worried wife (blonde goddess Darya Zabinsk) and best friend, morgue attendant Thomas (Paulin), take an alternative treatment route by feeding him the ground-up marrow and rotted flesh of cadavers stolen from both the local boneyard and Thomas' workplace. When Alex starts ejecting copious amounts of blood and worms from every orifice, Thomas looks for fresher sources of "medicine", attracting the attention of the police – and many more arcane forces. Alex makes a sudden recovery, but with an insatiable appetite for human flesh. The cops move in, the dead rise and the apocalypse is on, baby!

Bone Sickness builds deliberately for the first

hour but never drags; there are plenty of barbed-up worms, smashed-in skulls, rotted cadavers and a righteously goopy *Saw*! Saw dismemberment to hold your attention. But it's just a lead-in to the last 40 minutes, a rip-roaring orgy of some of the most amazing practical effects ever committed to digital video. The carnage and bodily mutilation in the climax, right up to the chilling final frames, is mind-boggling.

Director Brian Paulin dishes on what is surely the next great cult gore epic.

Zombie films have been done to death at the indie level, what made you want to take a stab at the genre?

I actually decided to make a zombie movie back in early 2002 when there were hardly any zombie films coming out. A lot of people kept asking me to make one, so I figured that it was a good time to go for it. It took a year and a half to film and almost another year to edit the original version. By the time I had my DVDs made in the fall of 2004, the market was flooded with indie zombie movies. I kept hoping that our fully rotted prosthetic zombies, over-the-top gore and stunts would get *Bone Sickness* noticed.

The amount of special effects in the film is astounding. Which one was the hardest to pull off?

Making sure that all the zombies were full head appliances at all times was the hardest part. I said right from the beginning, if we're going to make a zombie film I don't want to have any pale-faced zombies with black under their eyes. I wanted them decayed, dusty and fully rotted.

After signing with Unearthed, you shot additional gore scenes for the DVD release. What were they?

There were a lot of them. I added the shots of the corpse being cut apart in the cemetery at the beginning, Alex's bloody anal discharge in the shower, as well as more worms being vomited and eaten. ... We also re-filmed my possession scene and added us vomiting earthworms. Unfortunately this scene was delayed for over a week and by the time we set up to film and grabbed the worms from their container, they had all died. But it was late Saturday night and we could not go out and buy any more. So we said the hell with it and decided to film anyways, vomiting up these rotting earthworms from our mouths. That is why they are not moving in the movie when they spill onto my face. The worst part was the juice their bodies were secreting as they were rotting. It tasted terrible.

What's next for Morbid Vision Films?

I just finished shooting my next movie, *Fetus*, which is about a guy who loses his wife while she gives birth to their first child, which also dies. He cannot cope with his loss and becomes obsessed with contacting her by any means possible. *Fetus* is by far the sickest movie I have ever filmed. It is much smaller than *Bone Sickness*, but is extremely violent and contains an excessive amount of gore. ■

Mouth or anus: no matter what orifice ejects worms, it's all good



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AUDIO DROME

DAVE ALEXANDER, KEITH CARMAN, TOMB DRAGOMIR, MARK R. HASAN
AND AARON VON LUPTON**ABOMINABLE**

Soundtrack

Lalo Schifrin

ALPPI Records

Using a 90-piece orchestra, Schifrin's return to the horror genre should delight fans of his *Amityville Horror* score; plenty of tiered dissonance, heavy vibrato from the celli and ethereal phrases that often build to brassy waves of terror. But it's all tongue-in-cheek, and to ensure the score doesn't become too sly for its own good, there's some lovely melodic cues, like Preston and Amanda. After, the composition becomes more action-oriented, as with *Rappelling*, where Schifrin uses the full weight of the orchestra to reflect the cat-and-mouse game between Bigfoot and his bipedal appetites. Written with careful attention to detail and density, *Abominable* demonstrates the rich terror that lies within a traditional orchestra. Sometimes it just takes a septupletarian to transcend the genre. **MRH ******

**DAWN OF THE GOBLIN** Soundtrack

Dark Water Transit

Let 'Em Talk Records

Dawn of the Dead marked the beginning of Goblin's crossover into more synth-pop terrain before the group officially disbanded a few years later, so Dark Water Transit's

decision to reinterpret three themes from the film poses a bit of a quandary: play up the pop aspect, or balance it between the harder prog-rock sound that established Goblin back in the '70s, with some sweetening in the electronics department? DW's half-hour EP grows on you, because the band stays faithful to Goblin's original cues that never really developed beyond a few main phrases. The group doesn't go for instrumental improv — a hallmark of Goblin's early work — but these extended versions give the skilled musicians long chunks to play with a diversity of electronics, chamber instruments, brass and a few unobtrusive sound effects. The album's warm analogue sound definitely mandates loud playback through the home system. **MRH ***1/2**

**OUT OF THE DARKNESS**

Soundtrack

Midnight Syndicate

ENTRY PRODUCTIONS

Remastered and re-recorded by the members of *Midnight Syndicate*, this retrospective features material from four older albums, plus four previously unreleased tracks that showcase the group's leaded electronic music composed for public and private events. Track lengths vary from a minute to over five, but their order forms a symphonic journey that sometimes lulls the listener into a state of blissful horror. Whether it's the delicate melody of *Haunted Nursery* or the grand orchestral stylings of *Prisoner Of Time*, *Mid-*

night Syndicate is clearly going for a more cultured approach to horror, one that's unfettered by a movie or a scene's length. The up tempo, pop-rock *Druids* closes the album, figuratively drawing back the curtains to let in the sun until the next *Midnight fox*. **MRH ***1/2**

**GAG****Dennis Dreith**

PERSISTENCE RECORDS

Unlike satirical torture films, straightforward efforts to showcase sadism, degradation and emotional trauma are more

Soundtrack

Dennis Dreith

PERSISTENCE RECORDS

Unlike satirical torture films, straightforward efforts to showcase sadism, degradation and emotional trauma are more

**NOW PLAYING ON****RUE MORGUE RADIO**WWW.RUEMORGUERADIO.COM**WOLF CREEK****Francesca Tétaz**

COLOSSUM RECORDS (GERMANY)

If you had tumbled down a 40-metre well, broken every bone needed to move an inch and lost the ability to verbalize anything more than a sigh, this album would encapsulate your state of mind: desperation, self-blame and a pathetically unanswered hope for rescue. **Aussie**

Francesca Tétaz's debut film score is one of the bleakest soundtracks ever written — and its deceptive simplicity had some critics labelling the music as rudimentary ambience. Not so. Written in a kind of Asian-Eastern European modernism, Tétaz sticks to a sparse collection of water-like percussion clusters, sampled recordings of telephone wires, some eerie shimmering tonalities and a string quartet for the film's minimalist themes, plus swells of abrasive dissonance with piano and discreet synth pulses. There's bleak, and then there's Michael Reeves bleak. **MRH *******

Soundtrack

WOLF CREEK



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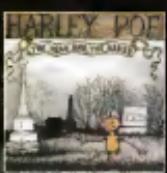
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HARLEY PEE

The Dead and the Naked

Standard Recording Company

"If you subscribe to the fantastic, if ketchup and pig intestines turn you on, if trashy movies get you wet, then you've found your heroes." Words of truth from Harley Pee, the mighty acoustic tour-piece helmed by Joe Whiteford (RUEM54). Packaged in a neat metal bin spruced with Whiteford's ghoul-torn art, this "EP" has five studio tracks and ten live cuts – a mix of new and previously released uptempo tracks about killers and corpses that play like love songs from a demented version of the Violent Femmes. With black humour a-plenty (Corpse Grindin' Man is about the other kind of grindin'), sing-along energy to burn ("Hey everybody, let's kill") and a price tag of only nine bucks (from standardrecording.com), *The Dead and the Naked* desperately deserves a place in every horror fan's murder music collection. DA *********



THE ROOST/JOSHU

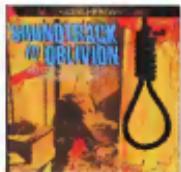
Soundtrack

Jeff Grace

MovieScore Media

An eccentric score by newcomer Jeff Grace, *The Roost* recalls the chilling music from the old *Twilight Zone* and *Thriller* shows. Nostalgic and brilliantly inventive, Grace goes beyond the physical limitations of his string quartet to create an extraordinarily organized collage of shrilling violins, nasty celli and close-mic'd Celtic percussion. One imagines all the rosin was rendered into dust each time the musicians reached the score's rustic high registers, or when sustaining unrelenting guttural tones in cues like Dark Terror Joshua, Grace's third score, is excerpted in five cues that close this download-able iTunes album. Eerie female

vocals in Woods Fight contrast the film's tender melody in Finding Joshua, while Grace employs subtle elements of aleatoric minimalism in This Is Anne to evoke an insect-like presence whose killing sting is preceded by a feather-light touch. MRH *********



SOUNDTRACK

TO OBLIVION

Psychobilly

Various

Kasar Records

There's just something about a psychobilly compilation adorned with a blood-splattered murder victim and a noose that makes you feel like you've found the right album. Luckily, the music on *Soundtrack to Oblivion* does not disappoint either,

offering 21 different psycho and rockabilly acts that steer toward the harsher, darker, and just plain badass side of the road, including Cosmic Voodoo (featuring Jeff Rafford of Tiger Army fame), Tombstones and Memphis Morticians. Boasting a coffin-load of previously unreleased tunes and even some live material, this is a thoroughly sick album for psycho enthusiasts that provides a killer soundtrack for fleeing the scene of the crime. AVL ***** 1/2**



THEE MERRY WIDOW

Psychobilly

Revenge Served Cold

Circus Music

Five Frisco Psychobelles singing about booze, Beelzebub and the ancient undead, Thee Merry Widows put whip to leather on *Revenge Served Cold*, a collection of rockabilly garage with some dusty western moments thrown into the mix. If you like it rough, dig the band's cover of Demented Am. Gals' Holy Hack Jack, as well as the final cut Talk Shit, Spit Blood, a tough-as-claws track that pretty much sums up the album. Check 'em out at merrywidownmusic.com TD *********



THE MASSACRES

Psychobilly

Season of the Scarecrow

Flying Saucer Records

Season of the Scarecrow marks the debut effort by Chicago grave-

yard psychos The Massacres, and unfortunately it shows. Revealing an appreciation for Gothic horror, the band incorporates some welcome melody and crooned vocals to the basic pummelling psychobilly sound we're all accustomed to, but it only results in a flat, under-produced effort, as if Tiger Army were just learning to play their instruments. The use of a *Night of the Living Dead* sample makes you wonder if they even realize how unoriginal they're being. With song after song dedicated to movie monsters, murder and ghostly hauntings, it's clear The Massacres have their black hearts in the right place, but we could easily say the same of countless better bands. AVL **2**



THE GHASTLY ONES

Surf/Garage

Target: Draculon

Gruesome Plastics Corp.

The Ghastly Ones are that rare band that lives and breathes horror both in and outside the spooky sounds that they create. Two members work in the movie monster-making industry, the band recently acquired the official touring hearse of legendary garage rockers The Monocles and they're big enough B-movie horror geeks to cite *The Horror of Party Beach* as their favorite film. Their first original album in nearly a decade, *Target: Draculon* sees the scary surf rockers shed their haunted beach party vibe for tales of terror from beyond the stars. But let's face it, you don't want this album just for song titles like *The Sighting*, *Ward Pendulum*, or *Flying Saucers Over Van Nuys*, it's the shinky reverb-drenched guitars, creepy organ and movie sound clips



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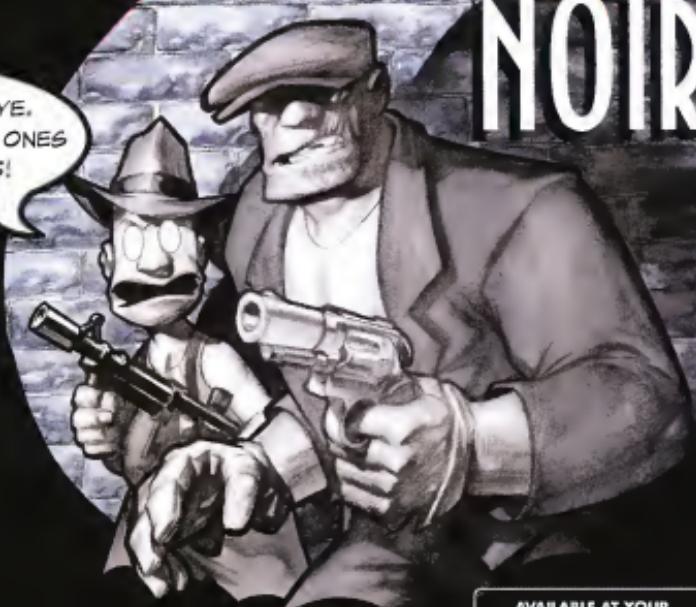
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SONGS FROM THE VIDEO DROME

BUCKETHEAD

Secret Recipe

Secret Show

Buckethead may be a massively talented guitar god who has collaborated with the likes of Lee Cloway, Betsy Collins and even toured as the guitarist for Guns N' Roses, but humor fans know him as that crazy guy wearing the creepy, expressionless mask and KFC bucket hat that — according to legend — channels the spirit of dead chickens. Apparently raised on a diet of drive-in exploitation movies, he's also appeared in a bevy of Japanese comic books and collaborated with Bill Moseley (Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2) in the band Combangs. With *Secret Recipe*, one of the funniest, most absurd and downright frustrating DVDs imaginable, fans get a closer look at one of the most twisted figures in music.

Disc one includes early audio demos, a hilarious guide to Buckethead's "deadly sonic arts" and an option to unmask the Buckethead doll on the menu, which results in an annoying error that actually shuts down the DVD. The best feature is the ton of camcorder footage of Buckethead goofing off at home with friends, most of which is gut-splittingly funny in a juvenile sort of way. The footage of him playing John Carpenter's *Halloween* theme on guitar is practically worth the price of the DVD alone.

Disc two offers the more traditional fare of live concert footage, with two performances in New York and Boston. Like the packaging says, this is pure bootleg quality material, but after sitting through the first disc's random insanity, it's sort of hard to picture Buckethead in a high definition, multi-angle arena rock video.

Though it offers its share of laughs and will literally keep you occupied for hours, be warned, *Secret Recipe*'s low-budget quality and total lack of organization may make for an incredibly irritating experience. Long-time worshippers will have a field day, but newcomers might not get the joke. **AVL 3.5**

Instrumental/Experimental



that will keep bringing you back to this mad monster mess.

AVL 3.5



LUGOSI'S MORPHINE

With a Demoral Chaser

Creepy Rat Records

Pretty much what you'd expect from a band with a bassist named Pat "Spew" Ribbon, Lugosi's Morphine is peddle sped-up psychotronic surf that recalls Shadow Aschenstein and 45 Grave. A reckless mix of ingnorant gothabilly (The Devil Bat) and old-time punk rock (Mommy's Head, Igor's Eyeballs). With a Demoral Chaser boasts bluesy stops and Satanic shakedowns over tunes about being ugly and real-life killers (Go Hugo Go) who buried their bodies in the yard. Down the hatch, Bela, down the hatch! **TD 4.5**



PERISH

Rock

Our Sin

AVD RECORDS

Proving that somewhere along the line Trent Reznor had sex with a Muppet, on *Our Sin* Perish plays pointlessly polished songs about not-so-deep things like final kisses and broken glass hearts with all the fake gusto you'd expect from a band that lists "rock attitude" in its bio. They must have thought doubling their emo/tonal vocals with a second death-grunt screamer

would help toughen the tender ninth-grade poetry of their lyrics, but instead it sounds like Cookie Monster karaoke to Three Days Grace. Perish are a bunch of goth-metal sock puppets whose only aim is sucking the bad TD OOA.



THE EMPIRE HIDEOUS

Industrial

Body of Work

Hell's Hundred Records

For the blink of an eye (c. 1989) Myke Hideous was a Misfit for what I'm guessing was just long enough to warrant mention in every article or review about him since. His real band, The Empire Hideous, is a dramatic death-rock pioneer of sorts dating back to the early 1990s. Compiling out-of-print material, Body of Work evokes the project from punkier, guitar-driven early tunes (Devous Child, Wile Wile) into the more dance-based goth rock of later, longer tracks such as Parasite's Bible and To Thread A Needle. It's a real find for fans of the band and those who prefer marching into graveyards over dancing in the streets. **TD 4.5**



SEVERAL STAR

Metal

Left Hand Pathology

LISTENABLE

From the album title (a homage to Entombed's *Left Hand Path*) to medical textbook-derived tunes such as Arterial Spray Obsession,



TIRED OF DOING THE MONSTER MASH AT YOUR ANNUAL HALLOWEEN BASH?
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SONGS FOR SAMHAIN

BY PAUL CORUPE

THE MUMMY

Bob McFadden & Dor

A voice actor best known for his portrayal of cartoon horror hero Milton the Monster, Bob McFadden created one of the all-time great Halloween songs with 1969's *The Mummy*, a musical monologue by a shy, nebbish of a monster who scares away everyone he talks to, until a jaded bestiary named Dor tells him, "Man, you got a warped groove." Dor was actually famed poet/singer Rod McKuen, who supplied the additional voices, while the music, a bouncy rock 'n' roll track is rumoured to have been performed by members of Bill Haley and the Comets. McFadden and McKuen pushed out an album, *Songs Our Mummy Taught Us*, which features the Mummy's forgettable covers of Shake, Rattle & Roll and Hound Dog but neither tops the goofy majesty of their original single. Available on: *Incredibly Strange Music*; Vol. 2 (Vapeshell)



YOU CAN GET HIM FRANKENSTEIN

The Castle Kings

Borrowing instrumentation from Rock And Roll Is Here To Stay, a late-'50s chart hit from Danny and the Juniors, *You Can Get Him Frankenstein* is a foot-stomping R&B number produced by frizzy-haired gun aficionado Phil Spector. In the 1961 song, the lead singer is forced to call his "good friend Frankenstein" when Dracula and the Wolf Man threaten his gal, only to have Frankenstein steal her away in the last verse! The never-heard-from-again Castle Kings were no doubt thrown together at the last minute by Spector to rill on the more popular chartbuster, but today we can appreciate the song as a rockin', monster-fied Halloween hit in its own right. Available on: *Monster Bop* (Buffalo Bop)



THE RAVEN

Buddy Morrow & His Orchestra

Morrow's highly unusual but undeniably cool 1960 album *Poe For Moderns* attempted to invoke Edgar Allan Poe's works through modern jazz, including *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Gold Bug*. You'll probably want to skip these tracks for your party-goers, though, and instead cue up *The Raven*, one of two vocal songs performed by The Skip-Jacks, a whitebread vocal group who offer a surprisingly toe-tapping rendition of the Master's best known work, reciting his prose as ultra-hip spoken-word poetry over a relentlessly syncopated beat. It's a song bound to impress the more serious-minded Halloween connoisseur, without clearing the dance floor. Available on: *Poe For Moderns* (RCA)



HALLOWEEN

Ron Haydock & The Boppers

Ron Haydock wasn't just another rockabilly crooner trying to cash in on the then-current craze for horror movies, he was living the life! The star of *The Thrill Killers* and *Blood Shock* (cheapo B-movies directed by his good friend Ray Dennis Steckler) recorded his moody ode to Halloween some time in the '60s but it was not released 'till '96. It's a sparsely plucked guitar song that captures both the fun and gentle spookiness of the holiday. He sings cautiously about ghosts, pumpkins, bats and cemeteries, while occasional bursts of maniacal laughter and the ethereal wails of a background singer provide an appropriately supernatural atmosphere. Available on: *99 Chicks* (Norton Records)



DINNER WITH DRAC

Zacherley

Four years before the smash success of *Monster Mash*, TV horror host Zacherley recorded perhaps the greatest Halloween novelty song ever. *Dinner With Drac* (1958) is a morbidly hilarious ditty that has Zacherley delivering clever monster puns over a rowdy saxophone and guitar line. Other horror hosts followed his lead and released novelty songs of their own, but no one ever matched Zacherley's wild rhymes, as he complains that "the hors d'oeuvres were fine, but I choked on my wine, when I learned the main course was meat!" Not surprisingly, a second, less "shocking" version was recorded for radio airplay that broke the Billboard chart's top ten in 1958 and made Zacherley one of the most infamous horror hosts of his time. Available on: *Dead Man's Ball* (Performance Records)



IN AND OUT OF THE FRANKENSTEIN DRAG QUEENS

FRANKENSTEIN DRAG QUEENS FROM PLANET 13

Little Box of Horrors

Resilient Records

Badass transvestite horror punk for ghouls who just wanna have fun, the defunct FDQFPI3 featured future Murderdolls singer/soloist Wednesday 13's son-of-Alice-Cooper vocals and a trashy interstellar landscape littered with monsters, Martians, murder and celebrities skinned alive. Little Box of Horrors chronicles over half a decade of grown men in bows, with all four studio albums, a rarities disc, live DVD and artwork from Eric Pigers (Toxic Toons). For fans of classic, caustic B-punk, Little Box of Horrors will swallow your ears alive, right after it checks its lipstick. TD 



Punk

WEDNESDAY 13

Fang Bang

Psychos

If you grew up in the '80s, sneaking into Friday the 13th movies and listening to Alice Cooper's *Constrictor*, you're bound to get off on these thirteen songs about people who died, places they kill and things like having blood in your beer. Hell bent on rocking the dead from their graves, Fang Bang is old-school cool with a cocky rock swagger, pun-filled lyrics and Wednesday 13's fiery vocals. A thundering punk anthem ("Till Death Do Us Part"), some sick little love songs ("Happily Ever Cadaver, Buried With Children") and a striking cover of Roky Erickson's awesome *Return of the Living Dead* ballad Burn The Flames, Fang Bang really buries the arrow in the eye-socket. TD 



Metal

THE GRAVEYARD BOULEVARD

Dead City Radio

EV Records

Soldiering on sans Wednesday 13 as The Graveyard Boulevard, lesser mentioned ex-members of Frankensteins Drag Queens From Planet 13 Abby Normal and Sicko Zero narrow ties to the intentional humour and junk culture that defined (if not overshadowed) their former band Pudding, hard horror rock from somewhere deep within the middle of the pack, Dead City Radio has cool tunes about Gunnar Hansen and Karen Black but suffers from fuzzy production, forgettable lyrics and songs that go on too long. Compared to the FDQFPI3 back catalogue, even Dead City Radio's deepest cuts sound static. TD 



Punk

Capricious Provisional Cadaver Grater and Vival Blunt Force Trauma, there's no doubt as to General Surgery's intent: revive the classic Carcass era of gorecore. Sonically, the band obliterates with a penchant for detuned cacophony clashing with bowel-rumbling grunts and gritty throat tear. Occasionally, it borders on riff-stealing when songs like Fulguration elicit more than just reminiscence to Carcass' *Symphonies Of Sickness*, but with an almost clinically crap recording, this disc has its moments of superiority. Regardless, General Surgery's raucous behaviour and indulgence in tongue-in-cheek splatter make this debut full-length a fucking winner. KC 



BLOODHAG

Half Bent for Letters

ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES

The world's first (and only) edcore band, Bloodhag is proof positive that some things may not work in theory but in practice, they fucking rule. Half Bent for Letters sees Bloodhag spewing forth one-minute bursts of vehement Brujeria-esque grindcore created by a bunch of sci-fi authors. As witty and informative as it is brutal and shocking, the album finds creators well-versed in both musical and literary mediums, delivering biographical songs (named after the authors they honour) peppered with personal opinion. Given the band's literary style, it's not surprising the majority of the disc rotates around sci-fi compatriots Gene Wolfe, Robert Silverberg and Jack Wom-

ack, but spot-on accounts of the lives of Poe, Bradbury, Wells and Lovecraft are wily and accompanied by lists of recommended reading. KC 



Metal

CANNIBAL CORPSE

The Bleeding (reissue)

METAL BLADE RECORDS

The Bleeding was notorious death metal outfit Cannibal Corpse's last effort with vocalist Chris Barnes (now with Six Feet Under, RMV48) and is often considered the gore gods' greatest effort before unearthing new grunter George "Corpsegrinder" Fisher. Now, twelve years after the fact, Metal Blade Records has re-released it with a bonus cover of Possessed's *The Exorcist* (previously available on the Hammer Smashed Face EP), a video clip for Staring Through The Eyes Of The Dead and new artwork courtesy of CC staple Vincent Locke (A History of Violence graphic novel). Though still a pulverizing death metal classic, what makes The Bleeding so cool is that it brings back the days when the band's lyrics could be considered genuinely unnerving – with their depiction of over-the-top human savagery and other nightmare fantasies. There's little new here to warrant re-purchasing an album that you already own, but for gore metal enthusiasts who have yet to hear The Bleeding, this is essential splatter-thrash that should not be overlooked. AVL 

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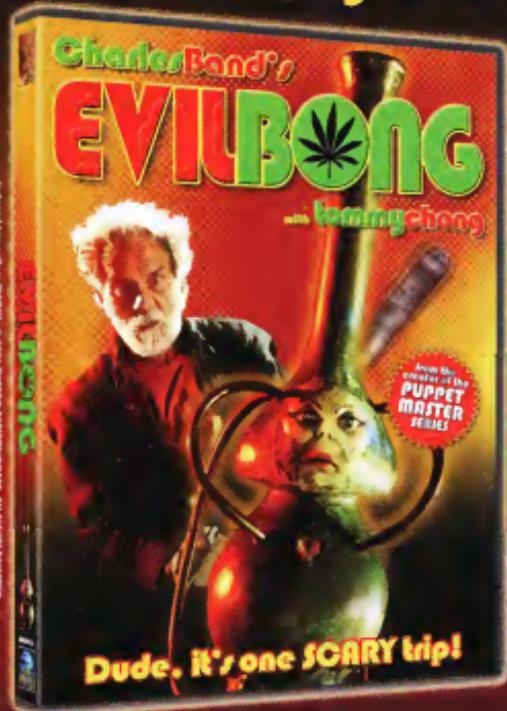


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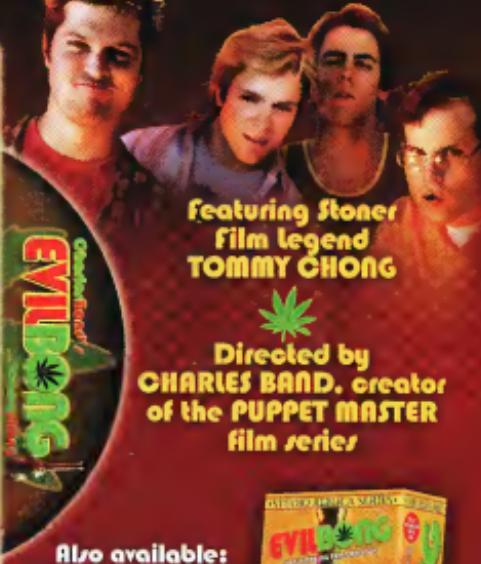
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PLAY DEAD

! GRAPHICS



PLAYABILITY



SHIVERS

HIGHEST RATING IS THREE.

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE



DEAD RISING

Xbox 360

Capcom

Just when you thought zombie games were getting staler than Bub's breath, Capcom – the company behind the *Resident Evil* series – hits the subgenre hard with one of the best games of the year. In *Dead Rising*, players assume the role of Frank West, a photographer covering a breaking news story who finds himself barricaded in a mall with a horde of hungry zombies. You've got 72 hours to find out why the zombie plague started and escape to a waiting helicopter.

Players move through beautifully rendered settings – such as a diner, toy store and the mall's rooftop – completing missions and earning power-ups while stomping shufflers with everything from soccer balls and coat hangers to electric guitars and plasma TVs. Honestly, you can use almost everything you find in the mall to kill a zombie, including knocking them down with bowling balls, decapitating them with weed whackers or flattening them with gumball machines. You can even blind them with pies; the possibilities are almost endless. Unfortunately so are the hordes of deadites that advance in wave after terrifying wave.

The only drawback to the game is the chunky save and load mechanics, which are slow and dated. The voice acting is a little lame but thankfully the soundtrack (which switches from mall muzak to pulse-pounding guitars during battle) and the fantastic sound effects of splattering gore save the day. Overall, *Dead Rising* is an amazing, edge-of-your-seat game with plenty of replay potential to satisfy the zombie killer in everyone.



MUNCHKIN BITES! 2: PANTS MACABRE

Card Game

Steve Jackson Games

Back in RMM44, I reviewed a hokey little card game called *Munchkin Bites!* where players take on the roles of hilarious miscreants and batte-bizarre monsters to the bitter end. The game's success has led to the release of its first expansion pack, *Pants Macabre*.



FEARSOME FLOORS

Board Game

Rob Lefkoff Games

Don't look back – just keep running because the monster is loose and hunting for your flesh! Packaged in an impressive box with high-quality wooden and cardboard tokens, *Fearsome Floors* captures the look and feel of EC Comics, making it as pleasurable to gaze at as it is to play. Two to seven players can take on the roles of groups of characters like the Star Trek geeks, the creepy clerics or even members of a family that look very similar to ones created by Chas Addams.

Trapped within the dungeons of Prince Flea's Fortress, players take turns hiding behind stone columns, inverting through ancient transports and sliding across pools of blood to avoid the ferocious monster Furukulus. Playability is convolvin' as you direct the monster towards opposing players while ushering your own weirdo spawn towards the exit. First one to get their characters out of the dungeon wins while the losers get eaten.

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Classic Cut

Presents

THE HAUNTED MANSION



USA - 1969
Disneyland, California

A long-time staple of amusement parks, fairs and carnivals, dark rides are those creepy spook houses tucked in a grimy corner of the midway, between the cotton candy concession and the crooked ring toss booth, that provide a few cheap scares for the price of a few ride tickets. When Walt Disney devised the ultimate amusement park, Disneyland, in the early 1960s, he decided it should offer a permanent dark ride attraction, but without the seedy carnal atmosphere of the county fair. Though it wasn't actually finished until the summer of 1969, a few years after his death, the Haunted Mansion was far beyond what even Walt could have envisioned.

Designed by a vast team of Disney Imagineers, including famed animator Marc Davis, technical whiz Yale Grace, and stage magic buff Rolly Crump, the Mansion combines spooky atmosphere, sophisticated illusions, and Disney's capacity for strong storytelling to create a truly immersive experience.

Conceived as a decayed Southern Gothic retirement home for ghosts, The Haunted Mansion comprises a seven-minute tour of the estate in track-guided "Doom Buggies", as narrated by the Ghost Host, a looped audio character played by well-known voice actor Paul Frees, whose credits include *The Thing From Another World*, *Godzilla* Raids Again and *The Abominable Dr. Phibes*.

Inside the lushly decorated

manor, passengers dodge cobwebs and chuckle at the Ghost Host's ghoulish puns as they meet the Bride (a wedding dress-clad corpse with a pulsing, bright-red heart), spirit-conjuring fortune teller Madame Leota and a multitude of other lively ghosts and ghouls — some animatronic, others projected through light and mirrors. Once riders enter the Mansion's graveyard, the spooky interior gives way to a ghostly playground, with music, laughter and singing statue busts, all pulled together by Grim Grinning Ghosts, a mischievously macabre song by Disney composer Buddy Baker.

To create what many believe to be the quintessential Old Dark House theme park experience, The Haunted Mansion relies on classic dark ride showmanship blown up to typically extravagant Disney lengths. Accommodating over 2500 guests per hour, it broke attendance records and became an immediate success in its opening year. It was boosted in part by *The Story and Song From the Haunted Mansion*, a promotional album featuring the vocal talents of Thurl Ravenscroft (best known as the voice of Tony the Tiger) and a young Ron Howard that was released the same year. The LP gave listeners a brand new scripted adventure based on the attraction, plus a recording of the familiar theme song. The popularity of the ride made it one of Disneyland's cornerstone attractions, and copycat Haunted Mansions were later built for the openings of Disney World, Disneyland Paris and Disneyland Tokyo.

Though not much more than gothy, spooky fun, The Haunted Mansion remains the most fully realized, technologically impressive dark ride ever created. In an age when its creepy forefathers have been torn down to make way for newer attractions, the Haunted Mansion legacy continues to build. Numerous Haunted Mansion-inspired games, model kits and puzzles have appeared through the years, and a 30th anniversary CD was released in 1999 that contained audio loops from the ride, including a rarely heard narration by Vincent Price that was originally recorded for Disneyland Paris' Phantom Manor, but never used.

Despite a poorly received 2003 film adaptation with Eddie Murphy that stayed far from the "storyline" of the original ride, the popularity of the Haunted Mansion can still be seen in lithographs, plaques and sculptures geared toward the adult collector market, as well as in a new line of Haunted Mansion comic books published by Slave Labor Graphics that outline a new back story for the ghostly characters.

In the summer of 2006, Disney Imagineers even modernized the character of the Bride significantly. Now named Constance, she has been changed from a tragic figure pining for a lost love to a gold-digging siren murderer, as indicated by a series of portraits of past husbands whose heads keep disappearing as the Doom Buggies roll by. Not only does this lend the Haunted Mansion a distinctly morbid tone, but it also serves as a constant reminder that even the "Happiest Place on Earth" can be transformed into a house of horrors — at least for a little while.

Paul Conope



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DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS



BLU
UNDERGROUND

DOLBY
DIGITAL



WIDESCREEN
166:1 16:9

Not Rated



Color • 1971 • 100 Mins.

International screen icon **Delphine Seyrig** (of *LAST YEAR AT MARENBRAD* fame) stars as Elizabeth Bathory, an ageless Countess with a beautiful young 'companion' (Goth goddess **Andrea Rau**) and a legendary legacy of perversion. But when the two women seduce a troubled newlywed couple (French beauty **Danielle Ouimet** and John Karlsen of *DARK SHADOWS* and *CAGNEY & LACEY*), they unleash a frenzy of sudden violence and depraved desire that shocked both art house audiences and grindhouse crowds worldwide.

Co-written and directed by **Harry Kûmel**, **DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS** remains one of the most exquisitely mesmerizing adult horror films ever made. Blue Underground is proud to present the Director's Cut of this classic psychosexual shocker newly remastered in High Definition and packed with Extras, including brand new interviews with Harry Kûmel, Danielle Ouimet, and Co-Writer/Co-Producer **Pierre Drouot**. Also included is a **Bonus Disc** featuring **THE BLOOD SPATTERED BRIDE**, a haunting shocker of reincarnation, lesbianism and violent murder from Writer/Director **Vicente Aranda** (*LOVERS*).

EXTRAS

- Audio Commentary #1 with Co-Writer/Director Harry Kûmel
- Audio Commentary #2 with Star John Karlsen and Journalist David Del Valle
- Locations of Darkness – Interviews with Co-Writer/Director Harry Kûmel and Co-Writer/Producer Pierre Drouot
- Playing the Victim – Interview with Star Danielle Ouimet
- Daughter of Darkness – Interview with Star Andrea Rau
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